



WIMPFEN.  
—  
VOYAGE  
TO  
ST. DOMINGO.

1817















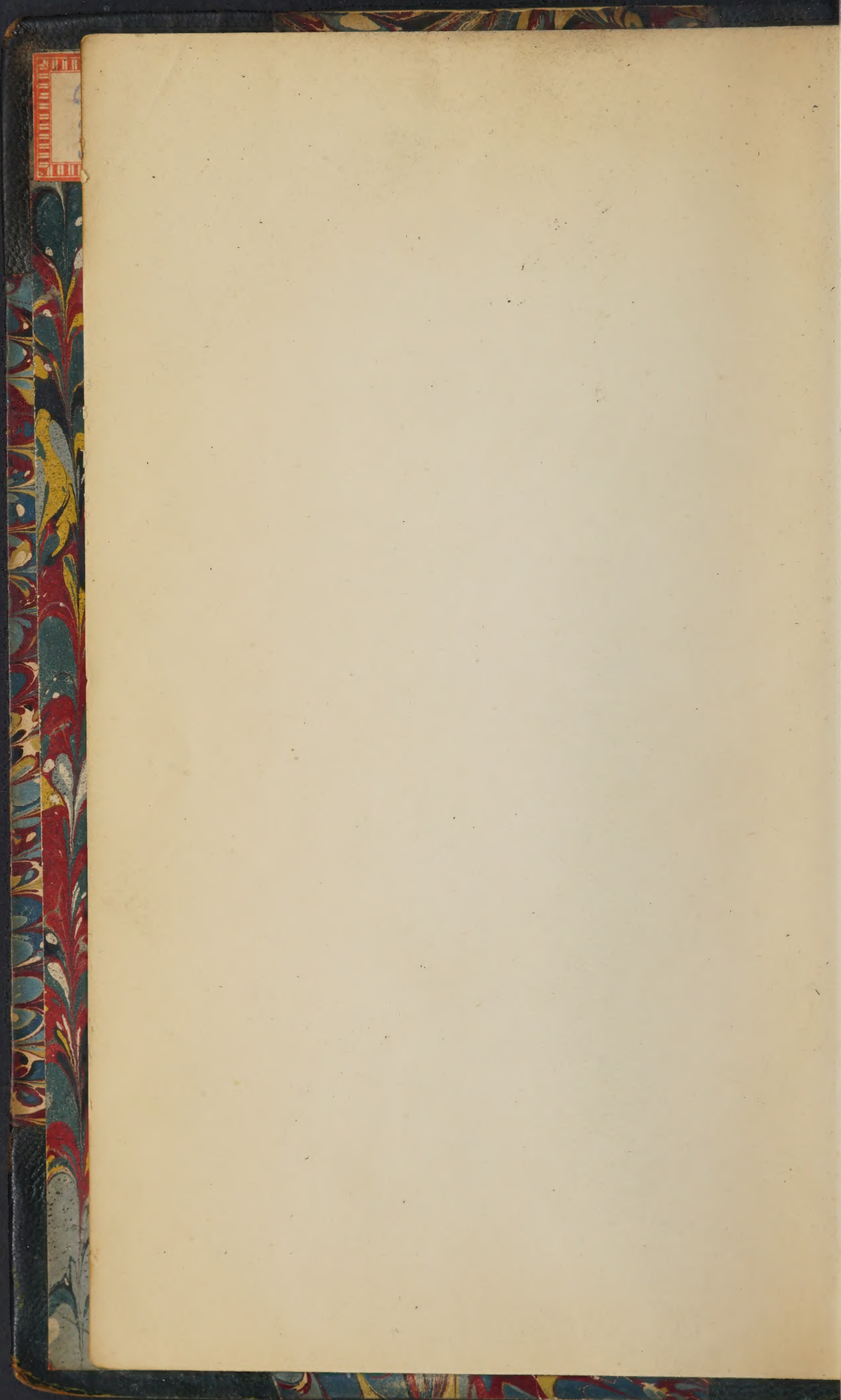
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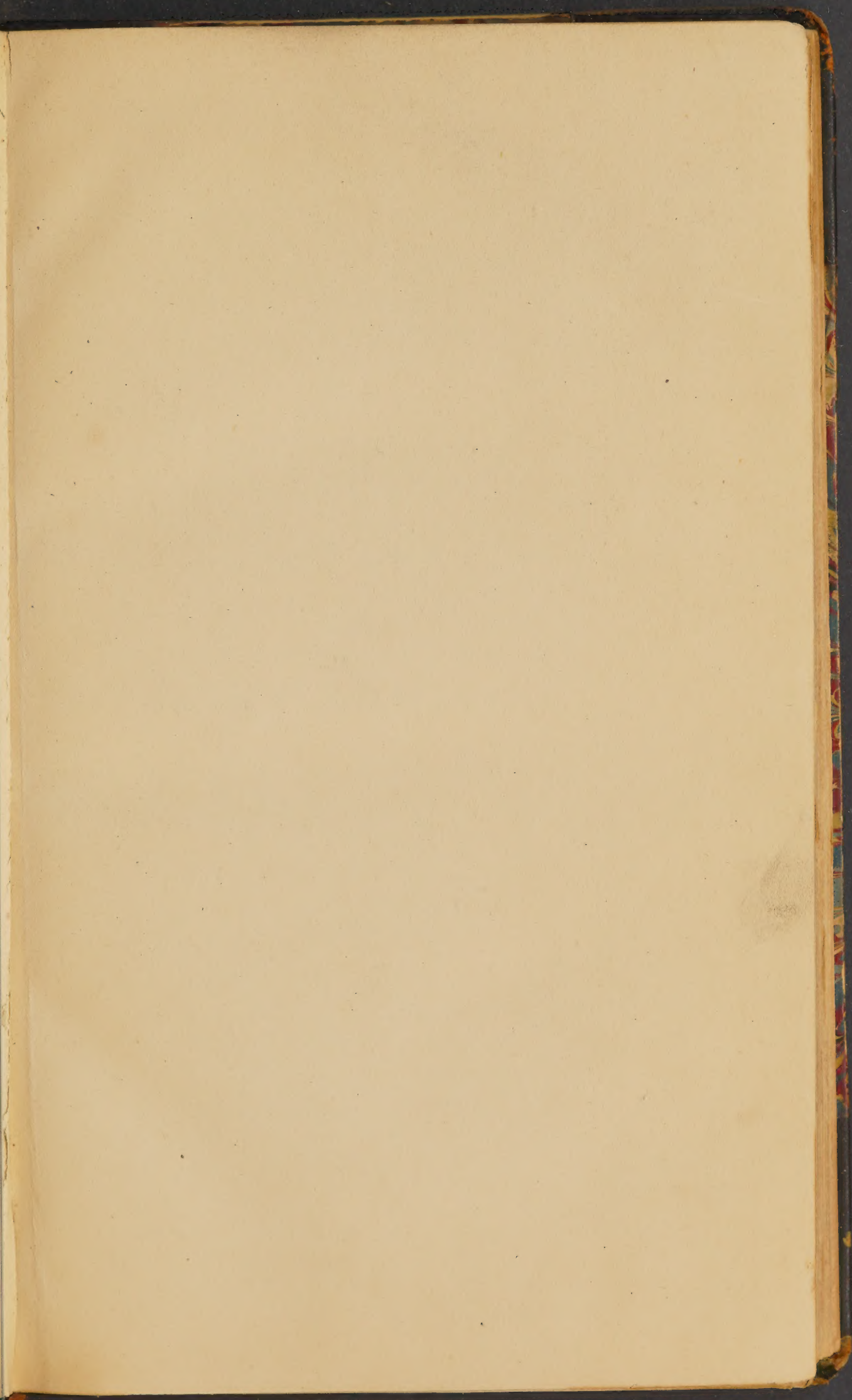




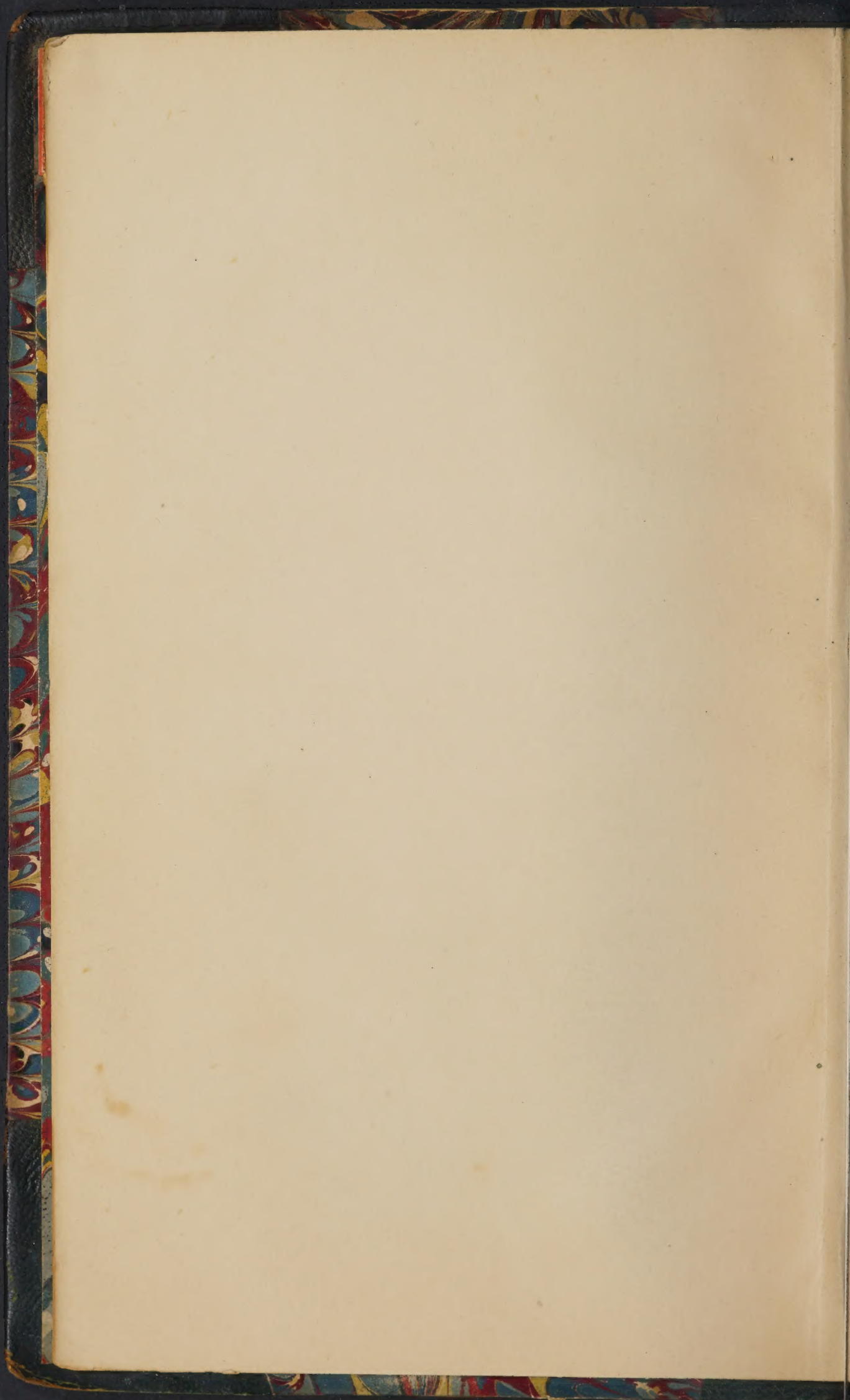








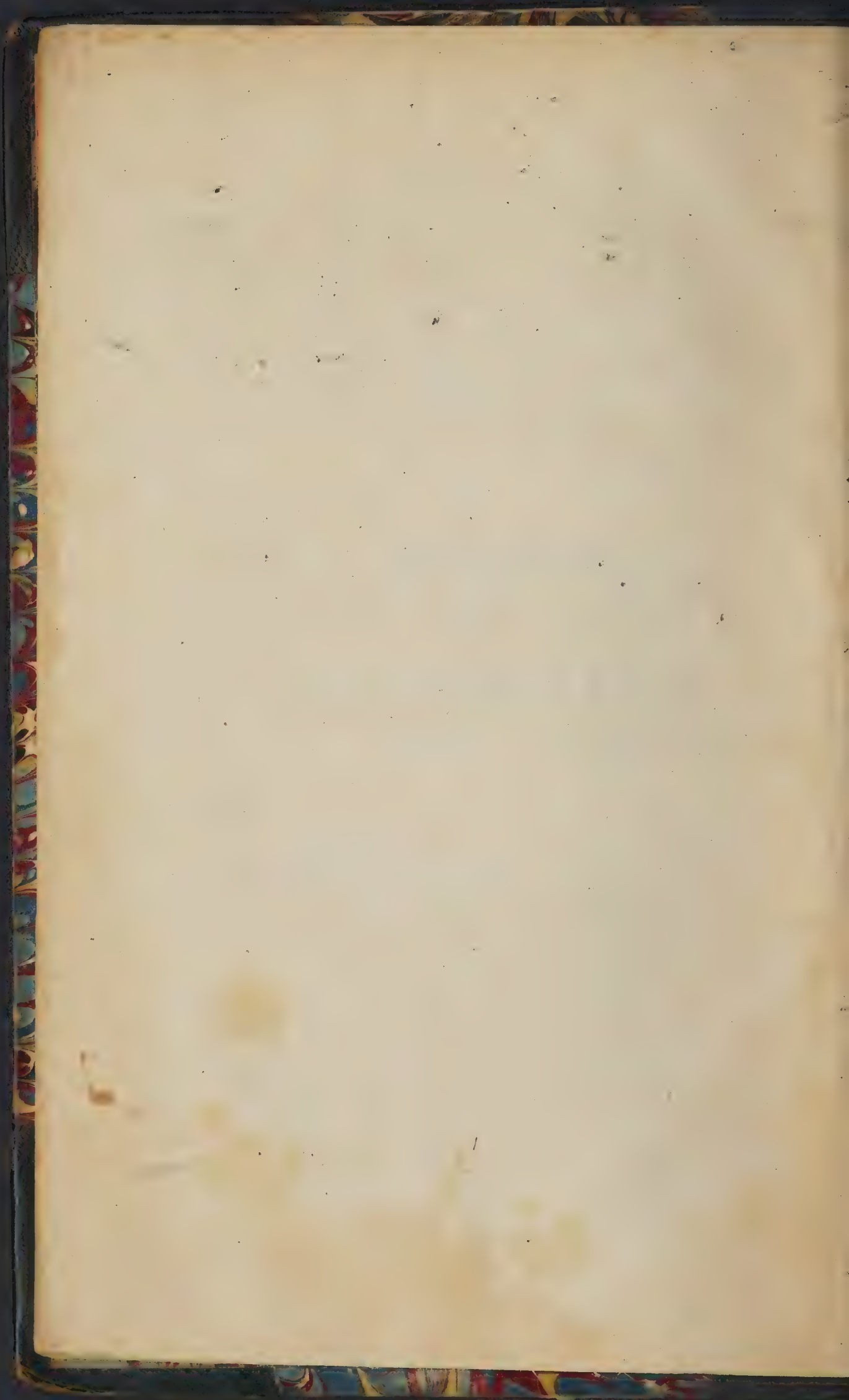






A  
VOYAGE  
TO  
SAINT DOMINGO.







A  
V O Y A G E  
TO  
SAINT DOMINGO,

IN THE YEARS 1788, 1789, AND 1790.

By FRANCIS ALEXANDER STANISLAUS,  
BARON DE WIMPFEN.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT,  
WHICH HAS NEVER BEEN PUBLISHED,  
By J. WRIGHT.

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*Les Voyages sont bons, non pour rapporter seulement combien de pas  
à SANCTA ROTUNDA ou la couleur des caleçons de la SIGNORA  
LIVIA, mais pour frotter et limer notre cervelle contre celle  
d'autrui.*

MONTAIGNE.

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LONDON:

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(SUCCESSORS TO MR. CADELL) IN THE STRAND;  
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THE DOCTRINE

OF THE

11933



TO  
HIS SERENE HIGHNESS  
THE HEREDITARY PRINCE,  
DUKE OF WIRTEMBERG, AND TECK,  
PRINCE OF MONTBEILLARD, COUNT AND SEIGNEUR  
OF LIMPURG, GAILDORF, &c. &c. &c. LIEUTENANT  
GENERAL IN THE SERVICE OF RUSSIA, MAJOR  
GENERAL OF THE CIRCLE OF SWABIA,  
KNIGHT AND COMMANDER IN EXPECT-  
ANCY OF THE ORDER OF SAINT JOHN  
OF JERUSALEM, KNIGHT OF THE  
ORDERS OF SAINT ANDREW, OF  
SAINT ALEXANDER NEWSKY,  
AND OF WIRTEMBERG,  
&c. &c. &c.

S I R,

YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS, in condescend-  
ing to accept the homage of a production, which  
can at most, pretend to mediocrity, certainly  
gives in this testimony of kindness, a fresh  
proof of the candour and indulgence which  
characterise true superiority. Those who  
have the honour to know and approach YOUR  
SERENE HIGHNESS, will not be surpris'd at it.

a

But



But if, instead of a severe censor, I have only found in You an indulgent Patron, let the public, at least, know that it would have been difficult for me to have chosen, even amongst the best informed men, a judge more enlightened, or more capable, from his multifarious erudition, and from the purity of his taste, to decide on the merit of any literary work whatever.

No prince in Europe, Sir, I might, perhaps, say, no traveller, knows this quarter of the world better than YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS. Germany, Russia, Holland, France, Switzerland, and Italy, have all, in their turn, seen You examine their productions, their industry, and the manners of their inhabitants. You have successively passed from the rocks of Helvetia to the dock-yards of Sardam; from the ruins of Herculaneum to the plains of the Crimea: and You are now about to complete the course  
of



of your observations amongst a people as worthy of being known as any of those You have hitherto seen; and from whom You will assuredly carry away, with the most advantageous opinion, the esteem and the regrets—so much the more lively, as your departure will be, for Great Britain, the epoch of a loss which she would consider as irreparable, if the virtues to which every Englishman pays so sincere a tribute of love and respect, in the person of the PRINCESS ROYAL, were not a patrimony which that country is certain of finding again in each of the members of Her august family.

While I regret, Sir, that this feeble tribute is so little worthy of YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS, I have still the consolatory knowledge that You will appreciate it, less by its own value, than by the sentiment which induces me to lay it at your feet; and that You will have the



goodness to judge of my gratitude by the sincerity of my attachment, and the profound respect with which I am,

Sir,

YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS'S

Most humble and

Most obedient Servant,

The BARON DE WIMPFEN.

London,  
April 15th, 1797.



## P R E F A C E.

I SENT to the press, in 1788, “ *Letters of a Traveller,*” which were merely an extract from a more voluminous work, I proposed printing with my “ *Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope;*” when, called to Saint Domingo by particular circumstances, I saw myself obliged to renounce the publication of a work which, in the present situation of affairs, might possibly not have been uninteresting to the reader.

The following pages contain a part of my observations during a residence of two years in the richest and most flourishing of all the colonies. It will be objected, perhaps, that to some details of importance I have joined others of too minute and trifling a nature for such as look for nothing in voyages but great political and commercial



commercial events. To this I might reply, that something must be allowed to *egoism*, which no more exempts travellers than other people, from the weakness of attaching a certain value to the honour of occupying for a moment the attention of the public. But, exclusive of this consideration, there are many readers more or less pleased with what may be called the dramatic part of a book of travels; and I frankly confess that I am one of the number.

The work, however, is very far from being so complete as it might have been, if unforeseen events had not compelled me to leave, in a *depot* from whence it may never be possible for me to recover them, together with the manuscript of my "*Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*," a variety of materials, by the assistance of which I proposed some day or other, to give a greater extension to my observations on Saint Domingo.

I am still farther from flattering myself, either that the severe freedom of my remarks will not draw upon me an ardent opposition, or that I am never in the wrong. "We ought  
" to



“ to exterminate all travellers,” says a modern writer, “ if their relations are to be refused every degree of credit, the instant it appears they have not had the good fortune to escape the sudden deceptions of their own imaginations, or the disingenuousness of others.” \*

Setting aside the degree of confidence my observations may merit, it is certain that very important ones might, at present, be made on the manner in which the conquest of Saint Domingo has been conducted: without entering into details, however, which would only fatigue the reader, I shall confine myself to the following reflections.

The supposition that nothing more was necessary for the conquest of Saint Domingo, than getting possession of the chief towns, such as Cape-François, the Mole, Port-au-Prince, &c. and consequently of the rich possessions in their neighbourhoods, proceeded from a false principle. Such tactics, with all due

\* *Histoire Generale de l'Asie, de l'Afrique, et de l'Amérique*, Tome 18.

submission,



submission, I cannot help comparing to that of those intrepid Buccaneers who fancied they had manœuvred with great adroitness when they had surpris'd a post, or storm'd a town—which they were obliged to abandon instantly, after a hasty pillage !

No well-informed military man will deny that, generally speaking, more courage, and less skill has been shewn in this war than in any preceding one. Turenne and Monteculi made ten campaigns, and as many conquests, without fighting a single battle ; at present, ten battles are fought in a single campaign; and the most paltry conquest, the most equivocal success is only obtained by prodigies of valour, and rivers of blood. \*

\* I am very far from denying great talents to some of the generals of the two parties. Heaven forbid the Archduke Charles should ever realize the promises of his early youth, and prove hereafter, a Cæsar in genius, as he is already in courage and in birth. With respect to the French commanders and their successes—It is, I believe, not very generally known that their so much admired manœuvres are the work of the genius of the great generals of the Age of Louis XIV. and that the well concerted, but ill executed plan of the last campaign, has lain, in all its details, for near an hundred years in the war-office at Versailles : but *Moreau* is not a *Turenne*, *Jourdan* is not a *Luxemburg*, *Buonaparte* himself is not a *Villars*, though he fancies he is a *Condé*.

I know



I know no method of conquering a country effectually, but by taking possession of the positions which defend it. The English, masters of these positions, of the sea, and of the defiles, which, in a country like Saint Domingo, render all communication between the different quarters extremely difficult; Leogane, Port-au-Prince, and the Cape, unsupplied with provisions, must have fallen in a short time; and in so much the shorter, as by confining themselves to the blockade of these places, nothing would have been more easy than to divert the streams which supplied them with water; thus reducing their garrisons to the alternative of an honourable capitulation, or of perishing with hunger and thirst. An ordinary man would have spent his whole life before Tyre without taking it: Alexander constructs a dyke, and Tyre capitulates! Nothing proves the total absence of a Genius for war more than not knowing how to advance a step beyond the track traced out by Art.

It appears to me then, that, in a country every where thinly inhabited in proportion to its extent, and which, more or less a prey to intestine divisions, was defended by widely  
scattered



scattered forces, the only proper method of proceeding was to insulate the different parts of defence, by interrupting, with well-chosen positions, the chain of communications : and then confining the whole to a war of out-posts, without undertaking any siege, or risking any engagement, but what a strict adherence to a well-combined system of defensive operations might necessitate. \*

Independent of the benefits which the activity and strength of the English marine secured to the troops on shore, its superiority gave them another advantage of the most material consequence. The French army could only be recruited by levies sent from Europe ; the English had in the neighbourhood, besides their ancient possessions, the lately conquered islands of Martinico and Saint Lucia ; from whence the troops in Saint Domingo might have received daily reinforcements.

\* Strictly speaking, I know that one army may always force another to fight. But I know, too, that if the army attacked be not in a bad position, or commanded by a fool, it is always an hundred to one that the attacking army is well beaten.

Undoubtedly



Undoubtedly the system I propose would require a much greater number of troops than were, in fact, employed :—but as I have neither the ambition nor the leisure to trace out in this place, such a plan of operation as the conquest of Saint Domingo seems to demand, I shall content myself with a few general intimations.

In my opinion, then, it would have been necessary to act with three different bodies of troops, of five or six thousand each, including the planters and negroes in the interest of the English. One of these bodies, by landing on the southern coast, where it would have been supported by the majority of the colonists ; and rapidly advancing to the summit and gorges of the mountains, which separate this side of the island from that of the North, would, by this single movement, have acquired two important advantages, 1°. That of menacing, at one and the same time, all the establishments between Port-au-Prince, and Petit-Goave ; and 2°. That of insulating all that part of the island which stretches from this last place to Cape Tiburon : and if the two other columns had moved at the same instant, one from Mole-Saint-

Saint-Nicholas, or Port-au-Prince, the other from Cape François, or Fort Dauphin, so as to form a junction near Plaisance, and fall with united forces upon Artibonita, while the fleet had successively shewn itself on different points of the coasts; it is probable that the French, thus attacked and menaced on all sides, would have been obliged either to extend their troops too much, or to unite them in a central point, where it would be so much the easier to block them up, as (provided the English were on any terms with the Spaniards) five or six hundred riflemen of that nation, divided into platoons, would suffice to harass their flanks. The advice which the son of Mithridates gave his father, might in the circumstances I have supposed, be remembered with advantage:

“ Que les Romains pressés de l’un à l’autre bout,  
“ Doutent où vous ferez, et vous trouvent partout.

RACINE.

I am aware of the objections which may be made to this plan of attack; but, observing by the way, that every military operation, how well soever concerted it may be, has its weak side, and its dangers, I shall cite a fact, of which I was witness, and which appears to me perfectly applicable to the circumstances in question.



question. The authority of a precept is never so well established as by the example which relates to it.

When the French, in 1768, invaded Corfica, they fell into the same error as the English at Saint Domingo: they attacked it with an insufficient force; and experienced the fate reserved for every operation thus frittered into insignificance. The battles of Borgo and Saint Nicholas had, by October, so reduced and dispersed the French troops, that they had even lost the communication between Bastia and Fiorenza. A reinforcement of six battalions enabled them to recover it, and to advance as far as Oletta. This momentary success, however, would by no means have answered the end proposed, if the attack of Barbagio, in February 1769, well combined in its details, perfectly military in its whole, and admirably executed in its outset, had been better supported by the islanders—for it ought to have driven us from Corfica.

It was then the Court of Versailles comprehended, for the first time, the necessity of proceeding more methodically, and with more  
adequate

adequate means, to the conquest of a country, which the nature of the ground, the fanaticism of liberty, insidious negotiations, and the secret assistance of England, would have defended a long time against all the efforts of France; if the military talents of the officers of this brave people had equalled the resources of the genius of their chief.

The plan of the Marechal de Vaux, who landed in the spring of 1769, with an army formidable in comparison of that which he had to combat, was nearly similar to what I should have proposed for Saint Domingo. While he conducted in person the principal attack, Mons. de Marbœuf, with a division of the army, menaced the plain of Mariana, and a strong column moving from Ajaccio, directed its march, like us, towards Corte, that is, towards the center of the island; of which the conquest was completed in the month of July.

That of Saint Domingo is, without contradiction, of infinitely more importance, and presents fewer obstacles. If the English wish seriously, then, to achieve it, they must employ four means, which I look upon as indispensable :



penfable : 1°. Sufficient forces ; 2°. A well-combined plan of attack ; 3°. A fystem of warfare adapted to the country ; and 4°. The art of uniting and gaining over the colonifts, by avoiding every thing that may give to refiftance the energy fhe borrows from the hatred which the conquered naturally feel for the conquerors.

I fhould write a volume inftead of a preface, if I were to enter into all the details of which the four meafures I propofe are fufceptible. The conquest of Saint Domingo by the united efforts of force and perfuafion, is ftill a work of difficulty : to diffemble, would be to reduce the overcoming it to an impoffibility—but it will be much facilitated, if eloquence be allowed to reckon in the number of its arguments a body of troops fufficient to over-awe.

With regard to myfelf, I fhall only infift in future on one fingle point ; that the plan of operations muft be abfolutely regulated by the locality of the theatre of war, and that of Saint Domingo, neither allowing of manœuvring in a line, nor of acting with an extended front, all muft neceffarily be reduced to the  
tactics

tactics of a mountainous country ; as they may be found scientifically developed in the "*Guerre des Alpes*" of the Marquis de Saint Simon.

I hasten to terminate this preface by a sincere avowal. I have occasion for the degree of confidence which reckons the suffrage of friendship amongst the presages of success, to determine me to publish this work, at a time when occupations of a very different kind, and interests much dearer to my heart than those of self-love, have deprived me of the leisure I stood in need of to render it less imperfect.

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VOYAGE  
TO  
SAINT DOMINGO.

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LETTER I.

*Havre de Grace,  
July 1788.*

I WAS not mistaken, Sir, in my conjectures, when I told you that I did not doubt but fortune would shortly present me with a fresh opportunity of practically extending the little knowledge which I have already acquired of some parts of our planet, and of the political, moral and physical existence of the different nations which inhabit it.

To say the truth, I by no means consider this knowledge as absolutely necessary to our happiness; but when accident presents us with the means of obtaining it, negligence would certainly be inexcusable: if it does not increase our stock of happiness,

B

pinefs, it may at leaft tend to render us lefs pre-  
fumptuous.

In fpite of an obfervation of Seneca's \*, it might certainly render us extremely ufeful to fociety, if, to the talent of drawing juft conclufions from accurate obfervations, we fortunately joined the power of infpiring the ignorant with a degree of modefty fufficient to enable them to comprehend that there are truths, derived from experience, which, notwithstanding they may run counter to the routine of cuftom, the prejudices of habit, and the principles of a contracted education, are, from that very circumftance, admirably calculated to extend at once the boundaries of the narrow circle in which they vegetate, and the means of being more focial; in other words, more neceffary, and more ferviceable to our fellow creatures.

“ It is the extreme of folly,” fays Charon †, “ for a man to fancy the whole world ought to “ think and act as they do in his village.” The fool calls every thing barbarous that does not accord with his own tafte and habitudes: and, indeed, it would feem as if we had no other criterion of truth and reafon, than the ideas we derive from the opinions and cuftoms of the country we live in.

\* See his fecond Epiftle to Lucilius.

† Sageffe, Liv. 2. Chap. ii.



Such, Sir, was not the honest Jesuit \*, who, taken by Commodore Anson and treated with all the respect due to the unfortunate, chose rather to be silenced, and finally driven from his Order, than to persevere in maintaining that “there was no salvation out of the pale of the Church.” The good man’s gratitude was perhaps excessive; and yet *he* cannot be said to travel in vain, who learns on the road not to damn his benefactor.

The vessel in which I intend to embark is called the *Venus*: she is commanded by the Monsieur Cottin, whose name appeared so often in the public papers in the course of the last war; and who merited the flattering distinction of receiving a sword from the hands of his sovereign.

I shall be the only passenger, and I do not regret it: for though a society, a little diversified, may be more necessary on ship-board than elsewhere, yet the qualities which constitute social harmony are so rarely to be met with amongst that class of

\* Voyage autour du Monde. Tom. 2. We may pronounce without hesitation, that our Jesuit did not belong to the diocese of that archbishop of Lima, who returning to Europe, in the ship of Captain Guiot, which had the skeleton of a Patagonian on board, insisted on its being thrown into the sea, during a storm, which he maintained had been raised by the bones of this unfortunate Pagan. See the Dissertation on America, Part 2.

people which frequents the sea, that I ought rather to be pleased than afflicted at the thought of being alone.

If I piqued myself on an accurate detail of circumstances as they occurred, I should already have some apologies to make for not having previously given you an account of my journey from Caen to this place.

I took my departure from the former town on a stallion, who would have carried me over no small portion of the country, if I had suffered him to follow all the mares which his instinct led him to surmise were in our neighbourhood.

I stopped to dine at Cuges, where I exchanged my unmanageable charger for a post-horse, whose vigour my spurs were as ineffectually employed in rousing, as they had lately been in controlling the passions of his fiery predecessor.

As the tide was in, I was obliged to ride several miles along the sand, up to the girths in water: this circumstance, however, did not prevent my admiring the richness and the beauty of the country which I left on my right, as I advanced towards Havre.

If



If the silly cockneys of Paris who come to this port, that they may boast all the rest of their lives of having seen the Ocean, "the vast ocean," would but advance a little on the road I came, they might feast their eyes with one of the finest prospects in nature ; that of a range of little hills, affording at every step some of those delicious situations which the English call *romantic*: where the country, embellished with all that art, that cultivation, that rational luxury can add to its native charms, presents a picture of ease, of peace and of happiness ; and forms a most delicious contrast to that awful expanse of dark azure, which, in a calm, is the image of immensity without bounds, and in a storm, the too faithful representation of the tumultuous anarchy and conflict of the passions.

At Havre they are employed in rendering the port more spacious and convenient. Their works do not appear to me of the nature of those of Cherbourg: they have all the impression of prudence and utility which characterises the enterprises of a commercial body, more engrossed by the care of acquiring riches, than the vanity of appearing rich ; while the others, calculated on a scale of grandeur, too probably erroneous, will, it is feared, prove little more than an everlasting monument of the inconsiderateness with which they were undertaken!

The

The town of Havre consists almost entirely of one street; but so full of bustle, so noisy, there is no need to see “the vast ocean,” to be convinced that you are in a port. Legions of parrots from all corners of the world, and of all sizes and colours, hung at the doors, the shops, the windows of every story of every house, talk, whistle, sing, scream, chatter like — what shall I say?

“Those horrid birds,” said my landlady, whom I had been listening to for an hour—“would to God they were all at the bottom of the sea!”—Ah! Madam, thought I—if you were like them—in a cage!

We shall sail to-morrow if the wind permits. The season is favourable, the weather fine, and the vessel commodious, though small. *Monf. Cottin* is said to be an excellent seaman, and as prudent as brave.—He is aware that the courage which borders on temerity is as dangerous to people of his profession, as the caution which degenerates into timidity. This part of his character will, I hope, be a sufficient guaranty to my friends against the menaces of the old proverb—“the pitcher goes so oft to the well—”

Adieu.



## LETTER II.

*At sea, August 1788.*

WE left Havre on the twenty-ninth of last month. A favourable gale carried us in twice twenty-four hours, out of the channel: and had we not been tossed about for some days in the perfidious gulf of Gascony, in consequence of its blowing a little too fresh, we should have experienced few of the disagreeable circumstances which render the life of a sailor so perilous and so painful.

Our principal occupation, indeed our greatest pleasure, next to that of seeing ourselves favoured with a continuation of good weather, has hitherto been fishing: an amusement, which, joining the useful to the agreeable, enables us to substitute for the poultry and salt-meat which soon pall upon the stomach at sea, a dish at once nutritive and delicious.

Besides tunny, bonitos, dolphins, &c. we have caught a species of fish which our sailors call *folles*, they are generally found, like the tunny, in shoals, but are a much more delicate fish: they do not indeed, appear so often as the former; for which I  
can

can only account, by supposing that the facility with which they are taken, may have contributed to thin their number on our coasts.

We had yesterday a calm of a few hours, during which we caught two sharks : the first, which was the largest, we hoisted on deck with some difficulty, and found that his mouth was furnished with *five* rows of teeth !

This fish, to which our ancient navigators gave the ill-omened name of the *Requiem*, is the tiger of the sea. His extreme voracity impels him to devour whatever he can master or seize ; so that he must have depopulated the ocean had not his destructive appetites been checked in some measure ; *first* by the singular situation of his eyes, which are not placed in the anterior, but on the two sides, of a large and flat head, and which effectually prevents him from seeing or following his prey in a straight line ; and *next*, by the form of his mouth, which opening under the head, obliges him to turn upon his back whenever he would seize his prey. Human flesh appears to be the favourite food of this monster : hence he is always to be found in the track of the slave ships, who commonly lose a considerable part of their cargo in the passage from Guinea to America. I am sometimes inclined to believe, that our politicians



politicians who harangue so earnestly in support of the slave-trade, belong to the genus of *sharks*.

A still more striking singularity attending this fish, and which shews how nature has indemnified him for the privation of certain faculties ; is, that he is always accompanied by two or three little fish, called *pilots*. They appear to reside principally upon the upper part of his head, where they subsist, as I am told, on the juices they suck from his skin. It is from this elevated spot they set out in succession to direct his course, by swimming a few yards before him. It is seldom that a shark is taken without his pilots being taken at the same time ; for at the first extraordinary motion he makes, they hasten to regain their post :—we rarely meet with parasites so faithful to their entertainer.

While I was conversing with the captain on that excess of ferocity, which, in the shark, is beyond doubt the natural and necessary consequence, of a law destined to prevent the too great multiplication of the ichthyological kingdom ; our sailors were preparing to give us a proof of that *gratuitous* propensity to wickedness, which distinguishes man from every other animal.

After

After fastening one end of a pretty strong rope to an empty cask, which they had previously calked, so as to prevent the entrance of a drop of water, they slipped the other, by means of a running knot, round the tail of the shark—an operation by no means easy; for such is the extraordinary strength with which that part of the animal is endued, that its terrible strokes make—not “the sea tremble,” according to the absurd hyperbole of the compiler of the “*Histoire Générale des Voyages*” \*—but, the decks of the strongest ships. They then put out his eyes, and, in that condition, threw him into the sea.

The efforts the creature made to free himself, afforded an entertainment barbarously singular: at one time he attempted to plunge into the water, at another to spring into the air; but equally in vain:—he was detained on the surface by the cask so cruelly attached to him.

His comrade was destined to be eaten; notwithstanding the flesh is of a dull and sickly white, impregnated with a urinous scent, and of a very rank and fetid taste. But what is there that sailors will not eat?—“I verily believe,” says one of our antient voyagers, “that the devil himself, roasted,

\* Tom. II. Chap. v.

“boiled,



“boiled, spitch-cocked, dragged through the cin-  
 “ders, would find it no easy matter to escape  
 “from their teeth\*.”

Shooting succeeded to fishing. The calm which enabled the birds to distinguish their prey at a greater depth, and the neighbourhood of a ship, which fish appear to love—not for the pleasure of seeing “a two-legged animal without feathers,” but because the novelty of the object attracts them—The ship, I say, and the calm had drawn around us a multitude of birds—our rivals and our masters in the art of fishing.

We killed numbers of them, for no better reason than to shew our dexterity: for their flesh, black, dry, and stringy, can only be eaten by such as are in absolute danger of starving.

The most curious of those birds were the *Man-of-war's bird*, and the *Arrow-tail*, (called by the Spaniards *Robo-de-Junco*,) a name apparently derived from the singular construction of its tail, which is formed of two long feathers, so intimately united as to seem but one†. The *Man-of-war's*

\* Journal d'un Voyage aux Indes Orientales. Tom. 2.

† Of this bird a more detailed account may be found in the  
 “*Histoire d'un Voyage aux Isles Malouines*.” Tom 2. Chap. xx.

*bird* is the eagle of the ocean; he has the size, the shape, the lofty flight of that monarch of the air. Both the one and the other, but more especially the latter, keep at such a distance, that an ordinary shot will seldom reach them.

There was another bird, which I own I did not expect to find at sea;—it was a kind of *bibou*, or owl. I know not whether he enjoys, amongst the sailors, the same reputation his brother does amongst the old women of both sexes on land, that of being the lugubrious and prophetic organ of death; but he has certainly the form, the nocturnal habits, the furtive and silent flight of the bird of Pallas. Our people called him *Poiroux*: the naturalists, I take for granted, distinguish him by a name more noble and sonorous.

At the sight of so many birds, which are frequently found at the distance of two or three hundred leagues from any land; who for the most part return thither to roost, and who undoubtedly lay their eggs there;\* one is naturally led to enquire, how they contrive to find their nests? For,

\* The inhabitants of Brazil pretend that the bird which they call *Calcamar* never quits the sea, not even to lay its eggs. I must beg leave however to doubt a fact which has no better support than vulgar opinion, and is contradicted by all the known laws of nature.

besides



besides that the immense space they have to traverse boasts no objects capable of directing their flight; it is simply impossible that the organs of vision can guide them to such a distance. To say that they regulate their course by the sun, is far from answering the question; for in the *first* place, there are many days when that luminary does not appear: and in the *second*, I have many times seen them flying and swimming around us, long after he had set:—besides, how can the sun, who varies his course from one solstice to another, serve them for a permanent director?—Let us for once be candid. This mysterious operation of nature distracts and confounds the imagination: for instinct, to which we so readily refer all the actions of the brute creation, appears to me a word much more proper to spare us the humiliating avowal of our ignorance, than to explain the use of a faculty which Providence has denied us.

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### LETTER III.

*At Sea, Sept. 1788.*

THE more I examine the animals, fish and fowl, which constitute at present a great part of  
our

our society, the more traces I find of an affinity with the human race: traces, extremely well adapted to humble our vanity, if we would call to mind for a moment that the only distinguishing faculty we boast, that of reflection, rarely serves for any other purpose than to render us more wretched and more wicked.

But is not man the only being endowed with the degree of intelligence necessary to enable him to live in society? the only one who has received the glorious prerogative of communicating with the Deity through the medium of thought? As to the *first*, reply the bee, the ant, and the beaver; “ we too live in society; and rather more harmoniously than you; and as to the “*communication*” you speak of, we do not see, though you have now enjoyed it so many thousand years, that it has contributed to render you a jot wiser, happier, or better.”

I ought to have more knowledge, or to use the proper term, less ignorance of the natural history of the different animals around us than I boast at present, to enable me to speak correctly and pertinently on the subject. I shall therefore confine myself to a few circumstances which forced themselves on my observation.

The



The fish most commonly met with is the porpoise. They swim in shoals, are found almost in all latitudes, and are divided into two species, the *porpoise*, properly so called, and the *moine* or monk. Both are too well known on our coasts, to render any farther description of them necessary. The sailors assert that they always swim against the wind; and I, who am no sailor, and who love to verify these kind of observations, assure you in my turn, that out of twenty trials, nineteen contradicted the assertion!

There exists with regard to the *procellaria* (vulgarly the *balcyon*, or tempest-bird, and who is not much unlike the martlet, or land swallow) a prejudice equally ridiculous: he is said to be the precursor of storms\*; and yet, in all the latitudes I have run through from north to south, I have never found the assertion justified by experience in a single instance. The bird probably fishes with more success in louring and tempestuous weather, than under a serene sky; and this I doubt not gave rise to the fable.

\* See Bourgainville's "*Voyage autour du Monde*," Tom 1. Chap: viii. It is still more astonishing to find this prejudice consecrated in "*Les Etudes de la Nature*," a work which we read with so much profit and pleasure, as to make us regret that any error should be found in it.

I should

I should ask pardon of the whale for not naming him before; for if bulk can give rank, he certainly ought to have stood at the head of my list.

He is here what the elephant is on land, (I must be understood to except his intelligence) the hugest, and without doubt, the strongest creature of his element. There are several species of them, of which the largest are usually found towards the north. They live, like the porpoise, under all climates, and may be met with from the poles to the equator.

A number of idle stories have been told of the size of this fish, more precious to commerce for his oil, and his whiskers, than the elephant, who has nothing to boast of but his ivory.

Among others, the archbishop of Upsal mentions his having seen a whale of such enormous bulk, that twenty men could sit with ease in the orbit of one of his eyes!\* Though the whale that swallowed Jonas was infinitely larger than those of the present day (at least, if we may form a judgment from the capacity of the *æsophagus*) yet we must allow him to have been a mere gudgeon

\* "*Histoire Naturelle des Régions Septentrionales.*" Livre 21.



in comparifon of this of the Hyperborean arch-bifhop.

The blower is no lefs common than the whale, of which it is a fpecies. It may be recognized at a vaft diftance by the water it is continually ejecting into the air.

If in the fports of your youth, you have been obliged to redeem a forfeit by a kifs, for having raifed a finger at “ the fifh *flies!*” † infift on having it back immediately. Your play-fellows took advantage of your fimplicity; for there are flying fifh to be found in great numbers, in the neighbourhood of the tropics. They are of the fize of a large fprat\*, and according to my tafte (which, I fuppofe, you do not rank very high) the moft delicate of all fifh. I am forry to add, at the fame time, that they are alfo the moft unfor-

† This alludes to a childifh game among the French, called “ *Le Pigeon vole.*” The names of a number of animals are rapidly run over, and the child is required to hold up a finger at the mention of fuch among them as fly. If a finger be held up at a wrong name, it is a forfeit. T.

\* The Abbé Choifi and Dr. Dellon fay they are fometimes found as large as a herring; but this is an abfolute falſity. See “ *Relation d’un Voyage aux Indes Orientales.*” Tome 1. Chap. 2. and *Journal du Voyage de Siam*, Page 30.

C

tunate;

fortunate : for they seem to have received the faculty of escaping from such fish as swim better than themselves, only to be made the prey of birds, when the imminence of their danger compels them to have recourse to their wings. Whole flights of them sometimes fall upon deck, where they are received with an hospitality not less fatal to them than the hatred of their voracious pursuers. Their delicate wings can only sustain them, while they preserve a certain portion of humidity ; and in no case does their flight extend beyond a musquet shot at a time \*.

Thus, Sir, like the weak, to whom an additional talent is frequently little more than a fresh claim to the hatred of the strong, these unfortunate fish find, in the advantage which nature has given them, a new source of persecutions and dangers !

Vessels bound to the West Indies are sometimes forced by contrary winds and currents, to range along the Azores. In this case it is not uncommon for birds, blown off the land, to make to them as

\* See the description of this fish in the “ *Histoire d’un Voyage aux Isles Malouines*, Tom. 1. Chap. 1. Dom. Pernetty the author, very incorrectly, in my opinion, calls it amphibious, because it has the power of quitting its element. But to constitute an animal really amphibious, it seems necessary that it should not momentarily quit the land or water, but be able to inhabit and live in the one and the other alternately.



to a port. I can say from experience that they are not better received than the flying fish. If an acquaintance with mankind has rendered them mistrustful, and they will not suffer themselves to be taken, they only escape for a moment, to meet a more lingering fate, when the total exhaustion of their strength precipitates them from the air, where they can no longer sustain themselves.

The neighbourhood of the Azores, discovered by Gonfálves Vilho, recalls to my mind one of the many stories blazed about by voyagers : to say nothing of the *qui-pro-quo's* of their editors, who, wholly unacquainted with nautical affairs, give us from time to time, in a tone of the most imposing gravity, the most laughable absurdities\*.

I allude to the story of the equestrian statue, found in the isle of *Cuervo* or *Corvo*. It was covered, we are told, with a cloak ; was bare-headed ; held the bridle of its horse in the left hand, and with the right, pointed to the Occident†.

\* Of this the author gives a curious instance ; but as the mistake turns on the similarity of two phrases, which in our language are totally distinct, it could not be made obvious to the English reader. I have therefore omitted it. T.

† *Histoire Generale des Voyages, Tome 1. Livre 1. Chap. 1.*

If this fable was imagined for the purpose of overcoming the obstinate incredulity of those who, for reasons best known to themselves, denied the possibility of the existence of a new world; it presents us with a melancholy truth—that we cannot hope to subdue that species of ignorance which believes only in the most common occurrences, or in miracles; but by assuming the mask, and the language of imposture.

The weather still continues fine. Our passage will be rather long, but it will be at the same time extremely pleasant; and I flatter myself, exempt in a great degree, from those hardships which render the state of a mariner little better than that of a galley-slave. The perfect harmony which reigns on board, and the laudable pains taken to vary our occupations, contribute to beguile the time, and push us cheerily on our way. The captain keeps his men continually employed, to obviate the consequences of idleness, which are always fatal to good order. Some of them make tow, others mend the sails, splice the cables, &c. &c. works by no means laborious in themselves, and carried on with mirth and song, under a tent raised on deck to secure the workmen from the too great heat of the sun. I frequently amuse myself with partaking their occupations; and untwist old strands of cord, as your fair ladies on shore do threads of gold wire;

so



so that, if I do not reap from my voyage all the advantages I expect, at least I shall have learnt how to make *half-bitcb knots*!

In crossing the tropic we performed the ceremony of baptizing the *profane* \*, that is to say, those who had never crossed it before; but with a considerable degree of decency, and mutual respect; without which, pleasure degenerates into pain, and play into actual strife. An entertaining book, a game at piquet, in which M. Cottin did not forget his old trade of *privateering*, and the relation of some very singular and interesting events in the life of this brave seaman, filled up the remainder of the day; and even carried our conversation pretty far into the ensuing night.

\* See the tedious details of this ceremony in the second chapter of the "*Voyage aux Isles Malouines*." The author gravely observes that "the ancients (who had no compass, and who in their longest voyages never lost sight of land) were unacquainted with this ridiculous ceremony!!!" It is undoubtedly passing strange that a rite, derived from an institution altogether modern, when compared with the existence of the Tyrians, the Phœnicians, and the Carthaginians, should not have been practised by those navigators.

The disorders to which this foolery has given birth, have occasioned it to be totally prohibited on board the king's ships; and I cannot help thinking it a little extraordinary that a gross caricature of a sacrament, confessedly of divine institution, should ever have been suffered among those who call themselves Christians.

LET

## LETTER IV.

*Jaquemel, St. Domingo:  
October 1788.*

I HAVE now been a week on shore ; and, assuredly, I was not altogether wrong in feeling no mighty symptoms of eagerness to arrive. What a country ! what manners ! what —— ! But, as I am too old to yield without resistance to the force of the first impression, I have adopted a resolution which I believe you will think not unwise. It is to suffer, what Montaigne calls “ the edge of “ novelty ” to be blunted, that a noviciate of some months silence, and observation, may ripen and mature the judgment I propose to hazard on the men and the manners of the country.

I am anxious, if it be possible, which I hope it is, to avoid the two principal rocks on which the majority of travellers split, exaggeration, and precipitate judgment. I shall not, therefore, like them, forming an opinion of the whole from a part, unblushingly sketch the portrait of a nation from a few traits of a particular society—paint man in his collective capacity, from an individual ; and lay it down as an indisputable axiom, that “ *all the*  
“ *women*



“ *women of Rome wear perriwigs,*” \* because I accidentally saw “ *the charming Rosalind*” with false hair! “ Travellers have long been noted,” says M. Volney †, “ for a strong propensity to aggrandize the theatre of their travels :” from this reproach I hope also to escape.—But to return to my voyage.

The constant good weather we experienced, having permitted us to take an observation almost every day, M. Cottin told me on the twenty-fourth, that if no cross accident intervened, we should see the island of *Desirada* before noon the next day. This was actually the case; and this, I think, is the only instance that ever fell under my notice, of a correspondence so perfectly exact between the observation of the latitude, and the measure of the log-line. This last is extremely subject to error; it furnishes, however, the only means of estimating the run, when the absence of the sun renders the quadrant, or the octant, of no service.

\* *Lettres sur l'Italie, par M. le President Du Paty.* Tom. 2. Lettre 87. Another proof of this precipitation, less excusable in a nation famed for reflection, may be found in “ *Anson's Voyage round the World,*” Vol. 3. Lib. 3. Chap. 9. where the compiler rashly determines on the probity and the manners of the vast empire of China from a few dishonest artifices of the inhabitants of Canton.

† *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte.* Tom. 2. Chap. 18.

The consideration of my being arrived in a new world, would have rendered me very attentive to the chain of islands we were about to coast, even though the pleasure of seeing land, a pleasure which can only be felt in perfection by the navigator, had not rivetted my eyes to every spot that rose above the water,

We saw, on the left, *Defirada*, which Columbus did not discover till his second voyage: ill-informed geographers represent it as uninhabited; it nevertheless contains a few planters, who raise a little coffee and cotton. We also saw the island of *Guadaloupe*, which we passed sufficiently near to enable us to distinguish the houses scattered along the coast.

On the right we left *Monferrat*, a mountain whose steep acclivities do not seem very susceptible of culture; and also the island of *Porto Rico*. — An accident which might have proved fatal, had nearly deprived me of the pleasure of continuing my observations.

Monsieur Cottin wished to fall in with the western point of *St. Domingo*, which we were now approaching. I had been tempted to stay on deck by the extreme beauty of the evening; and having taken my stand near the fore-shrouds about midnight,



night, I thought I saw something dusky and greyish break the line of the horizon. By keeping my eye steadily upon the object, I discovered it to be low land; and as we were running directly for it with all our sails set, and a fresh breeze, I saw there was not a moment to lose.

Without saying a word to the officer of the watch, I ran to wake the captain, whom I conducted to the fore-castle. His presence of mind was equal to his astonishment: he immediately requested me to let fly the starboard sheets, and, at the same time seizing the tiller of the helm, he ordered the vessel to be put about; and the sails luckily filled.—It was time, Sir, for we were not two cable-lengths from the land, which proved to be the little island of *Saona*, on which, if we had been shipwrecked, we should have found nothing but sand.

This accident enabled us to correct our reckoning: we now stood out to sea, and I went to lie down for a few hours refreshment.

The south part of St. Domingo was full in view when I awoke. The breeze, which blew from the land, brought us a confused mixture of emanations from a thousand different aromatics, amongst which the delicious perfume of the acacia was not the least prevalent.

Behold,

Behold, then, said I to myself, this land, this first sample of a new world \*!—a world whose discovery must have filled Columbus with the purest joy ; as it separated him at once from the croud of rash adventurers, to elevate him to the rank of the greatest, and most illustrious characters ! Never did a bolder enterprise decide a more important question. What a moment ! what a triumph for the admiral and his associates ! Inheritors of the power of the Omnipotent, continuators of his works, they had completed the creation ! History is only conversant with facts : we must therefore transport ourselves in idea, into the midst of the crew, if we would form any adequate conception of their astonishment : we must hear their cries of joy ; we must see the expression of affectionate and supernatural respect take place of the inquiet, and frowning glances of mistrust, discouragement and hatred, smarting under its sufferings. How must those men, madly impatient for land, have devoured with their eyes this unknown soil, these new productions, that strange appearance of nature † ! How must the  
sight

\* Though Columbus had previously (i. e. October 8th 1492) discovered *Guanahani* or *San Salvador*, one of the Bahama islands, yet I have taken the liberty to make a kind of transposition ; because Saint Domingo was the first spot where the Europeans formed a settlement.

† We must have a very inadequate idea of the delirium of joy into which the first sight of land threw these people, to say, with  
the



fight of this island have aggrandized their chief, even in the opinion of those amongst them who, not long before, exclaimed with the courtiers of the Escorial, "Nothing was ever more wild than "this enterprize;\*" but who will not at their return, say with them, "Nothing was ever more simple." No, they will be anxious to partake the glory of it, as they have partaken the danger.

Domingo was first seen on Sunday the sixth of December, 1492: and the prodigious influence of the discovery; the revolution it has wrought in the commerce, the politics, and the opinions of Europe, must for ever render the epoch memorable in the annals of modern history.

What a contrast, Sir, in the consequences of the principles adopted by the different powers, as they were actuated either by the spirit of *commerce*, or  
of

the compilers of the "*Histoire Générale des Voyages*," Tome 10. Liv. 1. Chap. 1. "that the first time the Spaniards landed in the "new world, they kissed the ground with humility."—No! they kissed it "with transport," as is asserted with much more appearance of probability by the author of the "*Histoire Générale de l'Asie et de l'Afrique*." Tome 13.

\* Columbus first offered his services to Don Juan, king of Portugal, who rejected them. In a journey which he made to this prince's court, after his return from America in 1493, the courtiers advised their master to put him to death: nay, they even went so far as to offer to assassinate him themselves!

of conquest †! That introduced into the new world, vices, arts, and wants; *this*, slavery and death. At the voice of the *first*, I see the indigent Batavian start from his barren wastes, traverse the globe, and by his parsimonious and persevering industry, cover his marshes with the riches of both worlds; and plant at the extremities of the earth, colonies more extensive, more wealthy and more populous than the country that gave them birth: while the Spaniard depopulates his delicious provinces to go and depopulate the Antilles, México, and Peru; and to raise wretched haunts for Capuchins, on the ruins of the proud empire of Montezuma \*! Surely the coldest imagination must turn with horror from the glories of Cortez and his successors, when it is recollected that they cost these unhappy countries  
more

† The desire of acquiring a perfect knowledge of the globe we inhabit, has given birth to a new species of ambition, that of discovery. Its consequences, with respect to the people newly discovered, do not differ much from those of the other two. It is to the credit of the natives of Van Dieman's land, or New Holland, that they were almost the only savages who had good sense enough to reject with contempt the presents they did not want, and which would only have created for them new necessities. See "*Nouveau Voyage a la Mer du Sud.*" Page 29.

\* I am not to be told that the monks of Mexico observe their vow of poverty as little as those of other places.—But the sumptuousness of the churches, the opulence of the monasteries, and the luxury of the clergy, no more supply the deficiencies of cultivation  
(the



more than twenty millions of men \*! “ What  
 “ blessings,” says Montesquieu, “ might not the  
 “ Spaniards have conferred on the Mexicans! They  
 “ might have given them a mild and beneficent  
 “ religion; and they brought them a frantic super-  
 “ stition; they might have set the slaves free; and  
 “ they made the free slaves; they might have shewn  
 “ them the enormity of human sacrifices; and they  
 “ exterminated whole nations. I should never have  
 “ done, if I were to recount all the good they did  
 “ not do them, and all the evil they did †.”

Adieu.

(the true basis of the wealth of the colonies) than the lubricity of  
 the monks those of population. In vain does Peru produce gold;  
 it will never be truly rich, till it produces men and grain. In  
 the city of Mexico alone, I am informed, there are *nine and twenty*  
 monasteries, and *twenty* nunneries!

\* Carjaval boasted on his death bed, that he had murdered  
 twenty thousand Indians with his own hand!

† *De L'Esprit des Lois. Liv. 10. Chap. 4.*

LET-

## LETTER V.

*Jaquemel, October 1788.*

I RESUME, Sir, without any preamble, the subject of my last letter.

The variety of the aspects, the novelty of the forms under which a rapid vegetation developes, beneath a burning atmosphere, productions unknown to the temperate zones; the line of country, of which no human voice interrupts the silence, no trace of cultivation the solitude; gave full employment for some hours to my eyes and my thoughts.

What is become of the gentle and peaceable beings who once inhabited it? Speak, Europeans:—tell me, where are they?—As long as they exercised the virtues of hospitality in your favour, you were satisfied with enslaving them.—Is it not so? But the moment you perceived that, startled at the excess of your absurd and brutal turpitude, they passed from love to hatred, from adoration to contempt, you hastened, like ferocious beasts, to exterminate men, who had received you like Gods! In vain do you flatter yourselves that time will efface the memory of your crimes. There exists  
—on



—on this shore there exists, a memorial, a river\*, whose name united with its waves, will roll down to the latest posterity, the remembrance of your madness and your guilt!

Such, Sir, were my reflections on the first sight of Saint Domingo: you will not confound them, I hope, with those of a factitious enthusiasm.

The question, whether the discovery of America has been advantageous or not, to *Europe*, remains hitherto undecided: but that of the influence it has had on the happiness of the natives of this part of the new world, is unfortunately but too well settled—they exist no more! †

The true, the original name of Saint Domingo, is involved in obscurity. Francis Coreal informs us that the natives called it Quisquia, Haïti, and Cipanga ‡. It seems to me that these were not

\* The River of Massacre.

† One of the Caciques of this island had succeeded in forming an establishment to the north east of Saint Domingo, of about four thousand of his countrymen, whom he governed under the title of Cacique of Haïti, perfectly independant of the Spaniards, excepting that there existed, in cases of importance, an appeal from his decisions to the “Audience Royale.” But so long since as 1718, the establishment was reduced to about *four-score* people of both sexes.

‡ “*Relation des Voyages*,” &c. Tom. 1. Chap. 1.

so much the name of the whole island, as of the different districts, in which the original inhabitants had formed their establishment. The Spaniards, at first, called it Isabella\*; afterwards they gave it the name of Hispaniola. In this they were followed by all the commercial people of Europe, except the French, who, confounding the name of the capital, San Domingo †, with that of the island, called, and still continue to call it, Saint Domingo.

I return once more to my voyage.

We found ourselves about sun-set, either by the negligence of the steers-man, or the force of the currents, unexpectedly under a bold and rocky shore, near the mouth of the river Naiba: here the wind failed us at once; so that we were obliged (for we were not in soundings) to hoist out the boats, and tow the vessel into the offing.

I was much pleased with the sight of the Naiba or Neiva, one of the most considerable rivers of

\* *Correspondence de Fernand Cortez, &c. Lettre I.*

† The “ *Histoire Generale des Voyages* ” concludes the history of the foundation of this city, with a most unpardonable blunder. “ It became,” says he, “ in process of time, under the name of “ Saint Domingo, one of the most flourishing of the French “ Settlements.”



the island. It appeared to roll majestically through an extensive valley, and, at no great distance from the sea, to divide itself into a number of channels, which had the happiest effect imaginable. Yet this charming spot did not appear, from aught I saw, to be either cultivated or inhabited: a circumstance I could not help regretting; as I much question whether it be possible to find elsewhere a soil more fertile, or a situation which promises greater resources for convenience and pleasure, to the planter; to whom the neighbourhood of a navigable river is always an advantage; as it facilitates the carriage of his merchandize.

The course of this river seems expressly calculated to form a natural barrier between the French and Spanish possessions: an idea which struck the commissioners employed on the part of France, to settle the limits between the two powers, before the all-powerful logic of the Spanish commissaries proved the propriety of a different line of demarcation. Thus France lost a large extent of valuable territory; while Spain, who left it wholly uncultivated, gained—what?—a mere contraction of her neighbour's possessions. This, you will say, is still something: it is so, without doubt; but Spain appears to have forgotten long since, that the power of a state depends less on its territorial space, than on its population.

pulation. What makes this demarcation still more extraordinary is, that so long ago as 1698, the Naïba is specified in the letters patent for the creation of the company of Saint Domingo, as forming with Cape Tiberon, the limits of the coast towards the south.

The Spanish part of Saint Domingo is infinitely more extensive, more fertile, and more abundantly supplied with water than the French; but, on the other hand, there is too little industry to be found in it, and too many monks. I am well assured that their estates are well cultivated, and their revenues well administered. The monks have always passed for good managers, and intelligent husbandmen: but I must take the liberty of observing that Usufructuaries in a state of celibacy, labouring for a fixed number of successors, and not for an unlimited posterity, will be less anxious in general to extend their cultivation, than to improve, and bring it to perfection. Even this, it must be confessed, is an advantage: still, however, it is an error of no small magnitude, and which affects the government on the side of interest, more, perhaps, than any other; to multiply, in the colonies especially, such establishments as check the progress of population\*, and, consequently, the  
breaking

\* The Spanish part of Saint Domingo contained in 1717 no more than eighteen thousand four hundred and ten white inhabitants,



breaking up of new ground ; industry, commerce, &c. &c.

Let us suppose, Sir, that there are in Saint Domingo five thousand monks. Substitute in their stead as many married men : the consequence will be, that in twenty years these five thousand monks will be replaced by a population of thirty or forty thousand individuals, clearing the ground, planting, gathering their different productions, and paying to the state at the rate of ten piasters a head\*, above two million livres. Should this sum even be absorbed by the expences of an administration necessarily increased with an increasing cultivation, there would still remain to the sovereign, the amount of the duties, both on the importation of colonial produce, and on the exportation of the various articles, with which the mother country has an incontestable and exclusive right to supply the colonies, in return for the expence of protecting, or in other words of preserving them.

tants, including about five hundred Frenchmen, who were principally engaged in the coasting trade : and I am credibly informed that neither the industry, nor the population of the isle, have much increased since that period.

\* In Europe this would be thought enormous ; but it is not so in the colonies, where an equal quantity of soil is infinitely more valuable than with us.

From Naïba to the little isle of Alta-vela, we found the shore broken and unequal, and of a gloomy and unpromising appearance. I could perceive no traces of cultivation along the coast. The Spanish colonists, naturally indolent, and moderate in their desires, are satisfied with breeding a few head of cattle, on whose milk they subsist; and planting a little tobacco, which they smoke, stretched at their length in a hammock, suspended between two trees. The more active among them carry on a trifling commerce with the French in *taffo* or smoked bacon, and in live stock, of which the horse, known by the name of *Baya-bondros*, is the most valuable article. They also, I believe, furnish Europe at present with that excellent species of tobacco called Saint Domingo; for the inhabitants of the French part of the island scarcely cultivate enough to supply the home consumption.

We passed Alta-vela within pistol-shot. It is a mere rock, with a few green spots about it, and which, looking forward to the time when some one of an invincible passion for solitude, shall fix his hermitage there, serves, in the interim, as a retreat for prodigious numbers of sea birds. Those who wish to fall in with land in the south part of Saint Domingo, should always endeavour to make this little island: a matter by no means difficult,

as



as it may be seen at a great distance: Its appearance is extremely singular, being that of a first-rate man of war under full sail. It was undoubtedly this circumstance that induced the Spaniards to give it the name of *Alta-vela*.

It will not be impertinent here, to observe, that this important point of recognition, is most inaccurately laid down in the coasting chart of the Antilles, lately taken by the officers of the royal navy. Not content with verifying the error in this, as well as in D'Après Pilots' Directory; we had the curiosity to examine an old chart of Saint Domingo, which I accidentally picked up, on my way to Caen; here we found the position of *Alta-vela* determined with the greatest accuracy! When we reflect that the indolence, the inadvertency, the want of exactness, in the officers intrusted with an affair of such importance as laying down the coasts, may cost the lives of thousands of their fellow-creatures; we must necessarily allow that government is either extremely unhappy to be thus reduced to a choice of subjects so little worthy of its confidence, or extremely culpable in granting it so inconsiderately, to men altogether incapable of justifying its predilection. Bougainville, although one of the corps, cannot refrain from reprobating this pernicious abuse of authority; and openly declares, that the French charts of  
the

the Indies are better adapted to cause the loss of ships, than to guide them\*.

Soon after we had doubled the isle, the frequency of the habitations which we saw along the coast, sufficiently announced that we had passed from the Spanish to the French part. At nine in the morning of the thirty-first, we were off the bay of Jaquemel; the sea breeze beginning to blow, we stood directly in for the town; and before noon I had the pleasure of finding myself safe on shore.

Adieu,

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## LETTER VI.

*Jaquemel, February 1789.*

NO, Sir, not even in this letter, shall I venture to speak of the inhabitants of Saint Domingo. I do not like to hazard a precipitate opinion, especially when it is not likely to be favourable, on the character and conduct of a people whom I already begin to suspect I have considerably over-rated.

\* Voyage autour du Monde. Tome 2. Chap. 7.

You



You will find then, in the present, little more than a rapid and preparatory sketch:—for I have hardly yet determined in what order to lay my observations before you—whether the country shall precede the inhabitants, or the inhabitants the country; or whether (which is the idea that best pleases me at present) I shall treat of the one and the other alternately, and as occasion may arise.

For the rest, I never understood so well as since I have been here, the astonishing power of what is called the influence of climate. The relaxation which the excessive heat produces on the organs of the body, is equally extended over the faculties of the mind. There is an indolence of thought, as well as action. The slightest labour fatigues—the slightest application over-powers. Such being the case, you must not expect to find much connection in my ideas, or precision in the manner of explaining them. As fast as a new object shall give birth to a thought, I shall set it down, if I have the power; for all aptitude to labour, all propensity to study, is rigidly proscribed in the colonies! What think you? Is it the imprudence of not yielding implicitly to this most sage proscription that occasions so many deaths in the island? We shall see.

Every where else the human species may be divided into two classes.

The

The *first* and the most numerous, that of the populace properly so called, simple, credulous, and uninformed, has little more than the vices which necessarily flow from a state of society; where all require that *each* should act for the whole; and where, in fact, *each* acts only for himself. Their virtues are of the lowest order; that is to say, such as, being rather inherent than acquired, do not demand any of those sacrifices, which stamp so majestic a character upon virtue!

The *second*, and the least numerous class, is that of the man distinguished from the populace, by birth, education, and fortune; or by a portion of genius and talents sufficient to counterbalance these advantages, by rendering the possessor of them agreeable, useful, necessary or formidable to his fellow-creatures. Supple, complaisant, and enlightened; good from weakness, and bad from calculation; rarely a dupe, and sometimes a knave: *he* will be found in possession of virtues whose lustre provokes admiration or envy; and of vices whose grossness is but too well concealed under the charms of amenity, and the varnish of the graces.

This division is not to be found here! You will see the reason of it 1°, In the enumeration of the different orders which make up the population; and 2°, In the uniformity of principles and manners, inevitable



vitable in a state of society acknowledging only two distinct classes—masters and slaves.

This uniformity in the relations which unite or divide the members of a community, ought to be considered as an advantage: for, besides obviating the effects of another inequality, in addition to those which necessarily result from a state of society, and from human nature\*; it contracts, and simplifies the observations from which we usually deduce the character of a people.

As it seems necessary that a certain number of absurd prejudices should imprint the mark of folly on

\* Nothing is more prejudicial to a good cause than defending it by bad reasons: and none can surely be well worse than those alledged by certain enthusiasts—that Nature herself furnishes the model of the inequality of society, in the physical and moral inequality of individuals. For to reason conclusively, it would then be incumbent on man (already subjected to a certain number of evils, the necessary consequence of his organization) to add to them the maladies which result from his intemperance, or from any other abuse of his physical faculties. It is not because there are giants and dwarfs, strong and weak, Vestris' and cripples, that there ought to be little and great:—it is because the distinctions which occasion the one and the other are inevitable, that a perfect equality of this sort is as chimerical as a perfect equality of fortune, of merit, &c. Remedy the evil if you can, or counterbalance it; but do not deprive yourselves of the only means of exciting emulation which the legislator possesses, except those rare and uncommon occasions where effervescence and enthusiasm supply, for a moment, the place of this all-powerful motive of action.

on every thing which relates to the human species ; it is here the colour of the skin, which, in its different degrees of shade, from black to white, takes place of the distinctions of rank, of merit, of birth, of honours, and even of fortune. So that a negro, although he proved his descent in a right line from the Magi who came to adore our Saviour, although he joined to the genius of a celestial intelligence, all the gold “ which the profound earth “ hides,” would never be any thing in the eyes of the poorest, the most paltry, the most stupid, the most contemptible of the whites, but the dregs of the human race, a worthless slave, a *black* !

“ He has relations on the coast !” Such, Sir, is the expression by which they manifest their contempt, on the slightest suspicion that a single drop of African blood has found its way into the veins of a white. And such is the force of prejudice, that it requires an effort of reason and courage to enable you to contract with such an unfortunate being, that kind of familiarity, which a state of equality pre-supposes and demands.

You see then that the chaos of claims and pretensions so perplexed and confounded *elsewhere* by the diversity of ranks, is *here* easily reduced to method. In Europe the knowledge of the different degrees of regard, of consideration, of esteem



esteem more or less *felt*, of respect more or less profound, is a science which requires a particular study: and as the exterior does not always correspond with the title, a discernment of the nicest kind, a long acquaintance with the great world, is necessary to enable us to distinguish the patrician from the plebeian, the noble from the vassal. Here on the contrary, it is only necessary to have eyes, to be able to place every individual in the class to which he belongs.

From these premises you will collect (without being expressly told so) that, from the governor invested with the power, and decorated with the orders of the king, to the scoundrel who, from the galleys of Marfeilles, brings with him the disgraceful mark which the iron of the executioner has imprinted on his shoulder, all the whites are upon an equality.

This respect for colour, which, like so many other established prejudices, is a mere absurdity in the eyes of reason, is, however, the palladium on which the destiny of the colonies is supposed to depend. It may appear ridiculous to maintain (what, however, is but too true) that there is some foundation for the supposition: nor, indeed, can it be otherwise; since this, as well as all the other vices of our establishments in these parts, is the  
necessary,

necessary, and inevitable consequence of an enormous error we fell into at the time we founded them.

To interest the cupidity of the rich, the government gave such an extent to its Concessions, that any one (taking coffee for the medium) might easily raise a neat annual income of fifty thousand livres \*. But as the labour of a single man was not sufficient to clear, to plant, and to gather in, the productions of so large a piece of land ; some infernal Genius inspired in evil hour the project of cultivating America by Africans †.

One abuse naturally brings on another. To the too great extent of the conceded grounds was soon added

\* A concession contained two hundred squares of one hundred square feet each (French measure). Coffee succeeds only in mountainous tracts, one fourth of the land must therefore be looked upon as incapable of cultivation : another fourth is usually allotted to what are called savannas, that is, meadows, and to the site of the dwelling house, its dependencies, &c. &c. This leaves a hundred squares for cultivation : each of those produces on an average, a thousand weight of coffee, which, at the customary price, yields an annual income of a hundred pistoles. The deductions to be made from this sum for the expence of cultivation, &c. will be seen hereafter.

† Who could believe that it was a priest ! the most humane, the most tender of all that have yet visited the new world, the celebrated bishop of Chiappa ; in a word, the virtuous Las Casas, who proposed, and caused the plan to be adopted, in order to rescue his beloved Indians from a state of slavery, which after all they did not escape.



added the enormity of granting to the same person, in the very face of the law, two, three, and sometimes four concessions; as the petitioner happened to be more or less powerfully recommended by the ministers, or protected by the administrators of the colony; whose cultivation, and indeed population, was materially checked by the indulgence: since no proprietor, how rich soever you suppose him, can possibly be sufficiently so, to undertake the establishment of several plantations at the same time. To elude the law, they procure the grant of a vacant concession, in the name of a relation, &c. and the government which felt the want of a good law, seems perfectly insensible to the necessity of causing it to be obeyed. The negligence, or rather the disorder, in this matter is so great, that land already granted, but abandoned by the proprietors, for want of means to cultivate it, has been granted a second time to others; and thus become an object of litigation between the old and new possessors. This inconvenience was supposed to be fully obviated by enacting that concessions of such proprietors as did not fulfil, within a limited time, the conditions under which they took possession (such as employing a certain number of negroes on a certain quantity of ground, &c.) should revert to the crown: but it happens in this, as it does in most other cases, that this act of vigorous but necessary justice,

justice, is seldom put in force, but against the obscure and unfriended planter.

Let us suppose now, that the measure of the concessions had been reduced to twenty squares; for the management of which, the labour of a poor European family would have amply sufficed. It would follow, that the same extent of ground, on which a few negroes at present vegetate, would have maintained fourscore individuals. Nor can there be a doubt, but that it would be much better cultivated by ten resident proprietors, than by him who, residing two thousand leagues from his possessions, has no better security for the care and fidelity with which they are managed, than the capacity of an ignorant steward, or the probity of a knavish agent! The English have followed this method in Barbadoes, and the consequences are, that this island is, in proportion to its extent, the richest and most populous of all their possessions in the West Indies. If then, as the judicious Labat observed, "the strength of the colonies consists in the number of the whites," we must necessarily admit, with this voyager, that "the number, he speaks of, can only be made up of what are called small planters."

I hasten, Sir, to combat the only specious objection, which uninformed, or designing people, can possibly



possibly oppose to this mode of cultivation ; I mean the insalubrity of the climate.

I reply, then, in the first place, that this insalubrity is to be attributed more to the excesses to which Europeans usually abandon themselves on their first arrival here, than to any inherent ill qualities in the climate. It is their own intemperance which renders a residence here so fatal to them.

In the second place, I reply, that the first cultivators of Saint Domingo, those who originally did what the negroes do now, were, what were called in the language of those days *six-and-thirty-months' men*, that is, men who let themselves to the planters for a term of three years :—and that there are some small divisions of the old Grants, yet cultivated by whites, who live on them in a state of decent competence. To me, these facts are arguments of the most irresistible kind.

Europeans have, I know, no small difficulty to accustom themselves to the climate : severe labour would infallibly destroy them. At the same time, I am confident that ten seasoned whites, without over-straining themselves in the least, would do the work of an hundred negroes ; because they would do it with more good will, with more understanding

derstanding of what they were about, and consequently, with infinitely more effect.

“ The experience of all ages, and of all nations shews us, that the work of slaves, though it apparently costs no more than the expence of their nourishment, is, on an accurate estimate, the dearest of all work ; since the man who is restricted from acquiring property, can feel no other solicitude than that of eating as much, and labouring as little, as possible\*.”

The colonists who maintain the contrary are either sluggards, fools, or impostors. In this matter, I speak from my own experience ; yet I have neither the habits, nor the degree of vigour which agricultural engagements demand.—“ The heat, and the unhealthiness of the climate, so frequently alledged by Europeans as the causes of their inactivity in the colonies, are nothing,” says an intelligent and observing traveller, “ but a specious apology for the weakness of men reduced by intemperance and debauchery ; and too vain or too sensual to have recourse to the labour of their hands†.”

\* Smith's Wealth of Nations. Vol. II. Book 3. Chap. 2.

† *Voyage autour du Monde, par M. de Pagés. Tome 1.*



And after all, Sir, what is meant by this miserable outcry against the climate? Can the population of the whites be only maintained by emigrations from Europe? Is there any law to prevent the women from breeding here? or was it ever heard, or said, that the air of this country was prejudicial to a Creole?

Let us introduce good morals into Saint Domingo. Let the planters, instead of attaching themselves to those black, yellow, livid complexioned mistresses, who brutify, and deceive them; marry women of their own colour; and we shall soon see the country assume, in the eyes of the observer, a very different aspect.

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## LETTER VII.

*Jaquemel, March 1789.*

MY sentiments, Sir, with regard to the slavery of the blacks, are no secret to you. I explained myself without reserve on this head, in one of the letters which I wrote to you from the Cape of Good Hope\*.

\* The manuscript of these letters is deposited, with many other papers, in hands, from which I do not know that I shall ever be able to recover them.

E

You

You are apprized then, that I have always agreed, and still agree with those writers who reprobate so strongly the infamous traffick we maintain on the coasts of Africa.

But while I do justice to the purity of their motives; let me be indulged with a few observations. I think, then, that the authors who have written on the negroes, from false or exaggerated reports; without the power of judging by their own eyes, of the kind of men for whom they plead, or of the nature of their slavery; have justly merited the reproaches of combatting by vain and empty declamation an abuse, whose defects are more than balanced by its advantages. I further think, that, as every proceeding of this kind ought to have in view the common good, it is dangerous, nay unlawful, to excite a prejudice against an order of things involving the safety and fortune of the public, without producing at the same time a remedy for the necessary evil. We have no need of those officious gentlemen to tell us that slavery is a hateful thing. What would they say to the Esculapius who presided over their health, if, in an overflowing of the bile, he should prescribe nothing for the complaint, but a furious invective against the malady which consumed them?

Our



Our age is unfortunately too fertile in political reformers\*; who are in a violent haste to pull down an irregular edifice, without having either the talents or the materials necessary to construct it again upon a better plan.

One simple argument shall suffice for all:

Your colonies, such as they are, cannot exist without slavery. This is a frightful truth, I confess; but the not recognising it, is more frightful still, and may produce the most terrible consequences. You must then sanction slavery, or renounce the colonies: and as thirty thousand whites can only controul four hundred and sixty thousand negroes by the force of opinion, (the sole guarantee of their existence) every thing which tends to weaken or destroy that opinion, is a crime against society.

In vain do the turbulent "*Amis des Noirs*" Friends of the Blacks, labour to support their doctrine by the example of the United States, where, except in Virginia and the two Carolinas, there are no articles of cultivation which require a

\* They will share the fate of the religious Reformers. Their tenets will produce much hatred and guilt, much misfortune and discord, which will terminate at length in indifference.

number of hands. In all the other provinces the quantity of slaves is so trifling, that it is very easy to supply their place by whites; they are brought up with so much care, and treated with so much humanity, that if the law, which emancipates them at a certain age, produces no disadvantageous effects on the fortune of the masters, it adds nothing to the happiness of the slaves, but the satisfaction of exchanging a forced, for a voluntary service. Besides, the United States, when they prohibited the future importation of negroes, took effectual means at the same time to prevent the progress of cultivation from being checked by the prohibition. Let our anti-negro men do the same. Let them give us, instead of vague and unprofitable babble, positive laws, efficacious means, salutary resources—in a word, let them be the “Friends of the Blacks” without becoming the enemies of the whites.

I have already observed to you that the abolition of slavery is incompatible with the preservation of the colonies: not absolutely from the nature of the thing, but because personal interest would infallibly oppose a thousand obstacles to the only method by which it could be effected.

This method is neither more nor less than a new division of land: and you will allow that there  
needs



needs nothing more than the mention of such a step, to raise an universal outcry against me. However as Providence has blessed me with a disposition on which the clamours of the multitude have little effect, I have no scruple to say, that the instant such a thing is possible, I do not see why it should not be seriously proposed. And what can be more possible! since while I reserved to the proprietor, from whom I should take two thirds of his concession, a right of mortgage on the dismembered part; I should still leave him at liberty to choose between reimbursement by installments, or a rent proportioned to the value of the fee-simple: both the one and the other to be determined by experienced referees.

Doubtless an operation of this nature would require both the concurrence, and the assistance of the government. And I have so high an opinion of its wisdom and beneficence, that I am persuaded it would contribute to the success of this species of political amputation, both its treasures and its authority. After seeing it lavish them for the sole purpose of rescuing North America from the yoke of England, it is impossible to suppose it would hesitate to bring about, in its own territories, a revolution which humanity, no less than its own glory, and let me add, its own interests, incessantly solicit at its hands!

Here,

Here, Sir, finishes my dream!—It is time to return to my subject.

Do not imagine that I pretend to justify slavery, or to dissemble the evils which naturally attach to it. I know no moral corruption more hostile to the manners; to the doctrine which softens, and the virtues which purify them; I may even add, to the spirit of subordination so necessary in a monarchy: for how can he whom the possession of the most unlimited power has habituated to uncontroul, bend to the yoke of the laws which oppose his will? How can the despot submit to a prince whose constant language is “such is our pleasure;” when he himself never uses any other than “such is mine!”

Perhaps the consequences of this want of sociableness might be obviated by delegating to the governor of the colony such a degree of power as would serve to over-awe the spirit of independence, so natural to the colonists. But the well-founded apprehension that he might abuse it; and the fear, by no means unreasonable, that an able and ambitious chief might one day take advantage of this very spirit to induce them to shake off the yoke of the mother country, have driven government to the expedient of rendering one power dependant on another; the intendant on the council,



cil, the council on the governor, &c. So that these authorities, always rivals, and never agreeing—(to give you but one instance of the perfect nullity of their influence on the public will)—have not, to this day, succeeded in causing a single article of the CODE NOIR to be put in force\*.

What then, you will say, do all these authorities do there? Not all the evil they might; and certainly not all the good. Each administrator, calculating on the uncertainty of his transitory existence, leaves the care of the public good to Providence, and bends all his thoughts to the advancement of his own fortune. Not one of them fails to recollect that Galvam, the only viceroy of the Indies who carried nothing from his government but the love and esteem of the people, found nothing on his return to Portugal but poverty and contempt†. Examples of this kind should teach sovereigns to honour, more than they

\* The rage of saying a good thing is the source of many follies. It is not easy to discover why the author of the "*Institutions Politiques*," so rational in general, should venture to say, (Tom. 1. Chap. 5.) that "he who fabricated the "Code Noir" must have had a soul as black as ink."

† Justice requires that I should here make honourable mention of another governor, Dom Juan de Castro, who at his death left only three reals behind him. Galvam died in a work-house. What a lesson for his successors! It has not been thrown away upon them.

do,

do, those exalted virtues which are the surest pledges of obedience, and of the respect of the people for the power under which they live.

I have observed just above, that I looked upon slavery as pernicious to the morals, and to the doctrine which should purify them. If, when I come to treat at large of the different classes which compose the population of Saint Domingo, I can subdue my natural propensity to indulgence; I shall find in the manners of the inhabitants but too many proofs of the justness of the observation. And if I should tell you, in the interim, that education here, in unison with nature, far from supplying the youth with any defence against the influence of the climate; far from checking the progress of the too-rapid developement of the faculties, and the inevitable exhaustion attendant on it; hurries them on, without intermission, from adolescence to decrepitude; that it does not allow sufficient time for the cheek of innocence to assume the rosy glow of modesty; but that youth and maturity languish equally here; one deprived of the bloom of its freshness, of the winning simplicity of its charms; and the other of the ascendancy which wisdom, experience and subdued passions usually assure it; in short, that from the disgusting alliance of all the absurdities of ignorance and sottishness affecting talents, with  
all



all the vices of an immorality, which cannot even alledge seduction as an excuse, there results a composition, which presents the humiliating picture of humanity in the last stage of degradation; then, Sir, divided between doubt, indignation, and contempt, you will perhaps accuse me of calumniating at one and the same time Man and Nature. And you would be right, if you could possibly suppose me so unjust as not to feel the necessity of making those exceptions which every general rule demands.

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### LETTER VIII.

*Jaquemel, March 1789.*

**I**F it were necessary, Sir, to begin the enumeration of the different classes of inhabitants, by the best; it is not impossible but that the one which stands first in the established order of things, might find itself at the bottom of the list.

This, however, I am pretty confident is not the opinion of the colonists who return to Europe. Puffed up with an extravagant opinion of their  
own

own superiority, and of the pretended delights which mark every instant of their lives with a new pleasure; they will insolently tell you that the black is here to the white, what the stupid brute is to the angel of light.

That, in a country where slavery has necessarily introduced an impassable line of demarcation, between the all-powerful master, and the all-submissive slave; the whites should endeavour to enforce the opinion of their superiority by every favourable prejudice, is reasonable enough—But that men, who must at least be conscious of their own imperfections, should bring themselves seriously to believe, and wish to persuade others, that a claim, which is not even the work of self-love, can justify the absurdity of those they found upon the colour of their skin; is an idea of the most preposterous kind: for this would be to admit, if they reasoned on their own principles, that the tawny inhabitant of our southern provinces, and the olive-complexioned Spaniard, were of an inferior nature to the Dutchman or the Swede! Besides, if it be true (and no pious Christian can doubt it) that God made man in his own image, ought we not to respect, even in the colour of the negroes, the relation which must necessarily exist between the creature and the Creator!

But



But let this prejudice remain, since it is necessary; it is as innocent perhaps as any other. Let those, however, who insist upon it, be well persuaded that it can only secure them from the dangers which hang over every impostor, as long as the illusion is supported by the two virtues which we love to attribute to superior beings—justice and goodness.

I proceed now to the enumeration of the different classes which form the intire population of Saint Domingo: observing by the way, that there is not a single descendant to be found of the original inhabitants.

The first then, is, of course, the white class. It comprehends the governor, the intendant, all the agents of government of every degree, the clergy, all the resident proprietors, the managers, the attorneys and agents of the non-residents, the merchants, the soldiers, the retail dealers, the artists, and finally, all the race of industrious labourers, whom the negroes call *little whites*; and whom want, shame, misconduct, despair, and sometimes the hopes of making a fortune, bring to the country of the world where living is the dearest, where industry has the fewest channels, where arts are the least honoured, and where the ill use which some of their predecessors made  
of

of the ancient and celebrated hospitality of the colonists, has rendered the inhabitants too circumspect to admit into their houses any but people well known, or well recommended.

It was in consequence of remonstrances on the facility with which adventurers of all kinds passed from Europe to the colonies, that the court made a regulation, which obliged every passenger to appear with the captain of the vessel, and a surety, at the office of the admiralty of the port from which he proposed to embark. But this salutary law, like every other, is evaded; because few captains refuse to *pass*, as they call it, the first vagabond who finds the art of interesting their pity; or the means of tempting their cupidity by a slight retribution. Whatever be the motive of such an action, it is at once a violation of the law, and a species of robbery; since such a passenger must live intirely on the ship's stores, and consequently at the expence of the merchants. But the agents of commerce, long since discovered, in the principles which direct it, the justification of those, by which they believe themselves exonerated from keeping too exact an account with probity.

The second class is that of the mulattos, quarterons, demi-quarterons or metis, and all, in short, who



who are called *people of colour*\*; amongst whom I place the free mulattos, proprietors of land, or living on their industry; as well as the domestics, free or slaves, of both sexes: for here the law comes to the support of opinion, and forbids the white to derogate from the dignity of his colour, by causing himself to be served by a white!

Originally every mulatto was free at the age of four and twenty; not in consequence of a positive law, but by the unanimous consent of the colonists. This regulation was extremely wise; as the vast disproportion between the number of the blacks and the whites, shewed the necessity of attaching the mulattos to the latter. On the representations, however, of some of the planters, whose calculations were deranged by the prohibition of selling their own flesh and blood; the king, by an edict dated in 1674, declared that the children should follow the condition of the mother! And I must observe, to the eternal shame of the Europeans, that if a law which debases them, by devoting their posterity to slavery, is observed with the most rigorous exactness; it is not so with another,

\* The following is an exact account of the progression of colour. The white and the female negro produce the mulatto; the mulatto and the female negro the *Grif*; the white and the female mulatto the *Quarteron*; the white and the female *Quarteron* the *Tierceron*; the white and the female *Tierceron* the *Métis*, the white and the female *Métis* the *Mamelouc*.

which

which expressly ordains that every master shall give each of his slaves two pound and a half of salt meat a week.

The black class is the last: it comprises the free negroes who are proprietors of land, and by no means numerous; and the slaves, whether *Creoles*, that is, born in the colonies; or *Bossales*, imported from Africa.

Although the distance between the slave and the free man be immense, yet, to avoid subdivisions, and minute distinctions, I have adopted the division of colour, as the most simple. For I must further observe to you, that the male and female negroes, as well as the male and female mulattos, in spite of the acquisition of liberty, remain in a state of abjectness, which not only disqualifies them from any public employ, but forbids them to contract with the whites a sufficient degree of intimacy, I will not say to sleep with them, but even to eat. If I visit a rich mulatto, he will call me *Sir*, and not *master*, like the rest. I call him *friend*, *dear friend*, &c. he will ask me to dinner; but if he be correct, he will not presume to sit at table with me.

Such, Sir, is the total division. Each of the three classes has besides its shades—such as those  
which,



which, in despite of complexion, separate the governor from the other whites, the mulatto from the free negro, &c. &c.

The compulsory precautions arising from the prejudice of colour, have procured for the inhabitants two advantages, which in some degree compensate for the ridiculousness of it. They render the government more circumspect in its arbitrary proceedings; and they imprint on the colonists a character of haughty independance, from which despotic administrators have more than once experienced a resistance so inflexible, that the court has been finally obliged to recal a governor, whom the habit of playing the nabob in the East, has daily tempted to transgress the bounds of his authority.

The natural consequence of the order of things which prevails here, is, that all those titles of honour which are elsewhere, the *pabula* of emulation, of rivalry, and of discord; which inspire so much pride, and create so many claims in some; so much ambition and envy in others; shrink to nothing, and entirely disappear before the sole title of WHITE. It is by your skin, however branded it may be, and not by your parchment, however worm-eaten, that your pretensions to gentility are adjusted. Thus you see that vanity, which on your side of the  
water

water torments and turns herself a thousand ways, to impose on the public, and usurp the tribute of respect which it accords to the claims of birth, would here lose both her time and her labour.

Each of the different classes of the inhabitants of St. Domingo has, as you will readily imagine, a turn of thinking, a stile of living, more or less approximate or distinct; which, after all, has little resemblance to what you will find elsewhere; because the climate, the regimen, the manners, the wants, the occupations, the degree of reciprocal dependency, establish here connections of the slightest nature; very different from those which, with you, Sir, bind together the members of the same society.

I might here seize the opportunity of entering into some details on this subject. But as the study of man in his moral capacity requires more application, and more experience than that of his existence in a social state; as the influence of the climate, and of a manner of living totally distinct from ours, acts necessarily on his character; and finally, as too servile a regard to method would infallibly conduct me to a fatiguing monotony; I hold it to be the part of prudence not to hasten my judgment; and accumulate on one point, observations, which, to be conclusive, should be the result of time, comparison, and experience.

For



For example: the first thing that strikes every traveller who arrives here with the faculty of observation, is, that in spite of the conformity of origin, colour and interests, the whites from Europe, and the white Creoles, form two classes, which, by their reciprocal pretensions, are so widely sundered, that necessity alone can bring them together. The former, with more breeding, more politeness, and more knowledge of the world, affect over the latter a superiority which is far from contributing to unite them. Yet, if the Creoles were a little more cautious than they are at present in their too early connections with women; if they cultivated with more care their extraordinary propensities to excel in all bodily exercises; if they seconded by a better method of education the natural facility of their genius; I am persuaded, that not having to struggle against the influence of the climate under which they were born, nor against the habitudes of a kind of life, differing essentially from that to which a European is obliged to submit himself on his arrival here, I am persuaded, I say, that all the advantages would be on their side. Nothing is wanting to the Creole, but a sufficient degree of good sense, to enable him to use, without abusing, the faculties with which nature has endued him.

## LETTER IX.

*Jaquemel,*  
*April 1789.*

I HAVE been here already more than eight months, and yet, Sir, I have not said a word to you about the town of Jaquemel, nor of the estate which my landlord has just purchased, and which, indeed, I have only visited twice.

There is a difference of opinion respecting the origin of Jaquemel ; some maintain that it existed at the arrival of the Europeans, under the name of *Yaquimo* ; others, that it owed its rise to *Jaques de Melo*, a Spaniard, who built the first house there.

However it be, Jaques de Melo was very far from thinking, when he raised his humble *ajoupa* \* at the bottom of a little bay, that his name would be one day metamorphosed into *Jaquemel* ; and his hut into a commercial town, a port, capital of three parishes, the residence of a Seneschal, a military

\* So they call a kind of hut, or hovel, composed of leaves and branches, where the planters usually reside when they commence clearing a new piece of ground.

chief,



chief, &c. It was thus that Dido laid the foundation of Carthage, without imagining she was about to raise a rival to Rome !

When I honour Jaquemel with the name of a town, you are not, Sir, to take the expression literally : for surely a few wooden barracks spread over a beach, or scattered up and down the acclivities of a rugged and stony eminence, were never yet supposed to constitute a town. With the exception, however, of Cape François, this is the definition of all you will find at St. Domingo. One rich planter has indeed had the temerity to build a tolerable house here of stone, at the hazard of seeing it crumble to pieces the very first earthquake.

Be this as it may, this irregular group of *Cafes* (so they call their houses here) interspersed with a few spots of verdure, forms, as seen from the sea, an appearance extremely picturesque.

A bay perfectly safe in the favourable season, good anchoring ground, and land ready cleared, which has much increased the cultivation in this quarter, bring hither every year about twenty ships, which are freighted with sugar, coffee, and cotton. For although Monf. Raynal gives the district of Jaquemel sixty-two indigo, and no sugar plantations ;

tions \*; I can venture to assure you that there are three of the latter, in full bearing, and not one of the former. The excessive attention which the cultivation of indigo demands, the success, at best uncertain, and the risque of losing in a moment the fruit of a long series of labour, have determined the colonists to abandon it altogether. In revenge they have extended the cultivation of coffee, less lucrative than that of sugar, but subject to fewer vicissitudes, and less dear; more expensive than that of cotton, but more certain, and yielding a greater return.

The cultivation of the district of Jaquemel is susceptible of a considerable increase: for, although all the land be conceded, it is very far from being all in hand; and what is so, is still farther from the state of perfection to which it might be brought. This, Sir, would not have been the case, if, by reducing the extent of the concessions, they had multiplied the number of the inhabitants. Plantations of a moderate size are always best cultivated; and for this simple reason, that the eye of the master overlooks them more easily †.

Among

\* *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Etablissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les Indes.* Tome 7.

† “ There still remain in England, and in Europe, some great estates which have continued without interruption in the hands of  
the



Among the numerous causes which retard the progress of planting, and fetter the industry of the planter, there are three pre-eminent: the capitation tax on negroes, the high price to which the commerce of France has raised this *commodity*, and the enormous charges of what is called Justice.

The author of the "*Philosophical and Political History of the Indies*" in enumerating the advantages which would flow from transferring the tax on negroes, to the different articles which they cultivate, has exposed but a small part of the evil arising from this impolitic impost. The object is sufficiently important to call for a development which shall leave the partisans of the capitation tax without a reply.

If an equal number of blacks, say they, produces an equal quantity of merchandize, is it not a matter of indifference on which the tax is imposed?

This sophistry can only persuade the ignorant. We will suppose, Sir, that I purchase to-day

the same family, since the times of feudal anarchy. Compare the present condition of those estates with the possessions of the small proprietors in their neighbourhood, and you will require no other argument to convince you, how unfavourable such extensive property is to improvement." *Smith's Wealth of Nations. Vol. 2. Book 3. Chap. 2.*

ten blacks: the law obliges me to register them to-morrow; and I am taxed in consequence of it. We will suppose again, what is too frequently the case, that two of the ten die before they are set to work: the king loses nothing, it is true; but he who taxes my workmen with an eye to the profit of a work which they have not performed; a profit which alone can enable me to pay, commits a glaring injustice, especially as he adds to the loss I have suffered, an increase of imposition, which can only be taken from the interest of a capital already diminished. Besides, to tax my negro—what is it but to add to the price of his purchase, the amount of the tax? Now, the dearer negroes are, the less I shall be able to purchase;—the less negroes, the less cultivation; the less cultivation, the less produce. Reverse the dilemma: the cheaper negroes are, the more I shall be able to purchase; the more negroes, the more cultivation; the more cultivation, the more produce.—In the name of common sense, then, and of common interest, lay your tax on the produce, “If,” says a modern writer of the first reputation, “the undertaker of some great manufactory, who employs a thousand a year in the maintenance of his machinery, can reduce this expence to five hundred, in purchasing an additional quantity of materials to be wrought up by an additional number of workmen; the quantity of that work, therefore,



“ therefore, which his machinery was useful only  
 “ for performing, will naturally be augmented,  
 “ and with it all the advantage and conveniency  
 “ which the society can derive from that work †.”

If ever government should find it necessary to lay a duty on the exportation of flour, what should we say, if, instead of charging a certain sum on every sack, it were to place the imposition on the wheels of the mills which ground it?

Another consequence of this vicious mode of imposition is, that the planter, to elude the weight of it, makes false entries: and such is the facility of concealing the number from the Exchequer, that there is scarce an instance of the fraud's being detected. Thus, odious for its rapacity, and contemptible for its impotence, government trains up the Colonist in the hatred of the legislator, and the ridicule of the laws.

I hope, Sir, that the importance of the subject will justify the lengths to which I have gone in treating a question, involving at once the sovereign, the colonists, the commerce, and consequently the common good of the colonies, and the mother country; by the latter of whom it should never be

† *Smith's Wealth of Nations*. Vol. I. Book 2. Chap. 2.

forgotten,

forgotten, that she labours for her own advantage, while she endeavours to promote the prosperity of the former.

I shall reserve for another letter the examination of two other important objects; the price of negroes, and the expences of justice; and terminate the present with an observation, which appears to me of the utmost consequence, though it be not immediately connected with the preceding remarks.

The price of negroes increases every day with an alarming rapidity. A picked negro, who costs at present near three thousand livres, might have been purchased a century ago for three hundred \*. If the price of the commodities they raise had increased in the same proportion, the evil would not have been great. But this is not the case; since many states, those in particular, who receive the productions of the colonies at the second or third hand, terrified at the exportation of specie, which the still-increasing prices of them occasion, have taken the most just, as well as the most efficacious measures to set bounds to their consumption.

On whom, then, must finally fall the loss which results from so striking a disproportion between the

\* See "*Les Voyages du Sicur Le Maire.*" Page 73.



expence and the profits of cultivation?—On the cultivator.

From whence comes the evil? and how can it be obviated?

The first question I will endeavour to answer; the second must be left to the discretion of government.

Nature proceeds with regularity. She balances, according to proportions which we may sometimes alter, but can never destroy, losses by supplies; that is, deaths by births; in such a manner that the earth may have at all times nearly the same number of inhabitants. It is not her fault, if our crimes, our passions, and our follies derange this beautiful order;—if our avarice tempts us to tear *ten* inhabitants from one country, for the sake of adding *one* to another!

Yet this is what is done by the traffic in negroes! The enormous consumption which the trade, a most worthy rival of the pestilence, has occasioned on the coasts of Africa, has so depopulated them, that the dealers are necessitated to seek for slaves above a thousand leagues up the country!

That

That the price of ore should increase as the mine becomes more and more exhausted, is a simple proposition: but that it should be possible to maintain a just proportion between two objects of exchange, one of which continues to rise in value in proportion to its ever-increasing scarcity, while the other, bounded in its consumption, has already reached its maximum, is, in my opinion, the most extravagant of absurdities.

We must then look forward to an epoch, which is not, perhaps, so distant as we may imagine;—that of the total cessation of the slave trade. Of two things one must happen: either the difficulty of procuring slaves will raise their value so high as to incapacitate the planter from purchasing them, or the Africans, enlightened by experience, and terrified at a depopulation which menaces a total destruction, will of themselves renounce the traffic. The consequence of either supposition is the same. It is impossible but they must be realized sooner or later: and I do not yet see that any steps have been taken to obviate the inevitable effect—the ruin of the colonies.

A calculation made in 1775, proves, that in a lapse of two hundred and forty years, more than ten million of negroes have been imported into the colonies. At present, these same colonies require  
more



more than one hundred thousand annually; and if you add to this number, those who perish in the wars to which this traffic gives birth, and in the middle passage, by sickness, shipwrecks, and revolts, you will find it necessary to double it; which in a period of thirty years, carries the consumption to the amazing sum of *six* millions!—I will now ask you, whether it be possible that the population of Africa should not be speedily exhausted?

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LETTER X.

THE consequences of the excessive price of negroes, with respect to the ulterior prosperity of the colonies, may be understood, Sir, without being particularly insisted on. As I may not again have an opportunity of recurring to this subject, I will tell you what steps I have taken relative to it.

It is now more than four months ago, that, surprised at the trifling profits the planters derived from their estates, I fancied I must seek for the source of the evil in something besides their inattention:

tention: and the dearness of negroes was pointed out to me.

Pursuing my researches, I found that the English of the neighbouring isles privately furnished the colonists, for twelve or fourteen hundred livres, with as good a black as they could buy of our traders for seven or eight and twenty hundred.

Overcome by the intreaties of some of the inhabitants, I took upon me to draw up, and transmit to the minister of the marine, a memorial, in which I pointed out the necessity of permitting the introduction of four thousand negroes in prohibited vessels: and, as I foresaw the objection of the prejudice which this act of beneficence would occasion to the commerce of the mother country, I took extraordinary pains to demonstrate that it ought to be a matter of indifference to her, if I purchased elsewhere, what she was incapable of supplying me with, but at a price above my means; that what she might have gained on these four thousand negroes (a gain, by the bye, she could not have made, since they would not have been bought of her) would be more than compensated by her profits on the produce of the industry of the four thousand additional labourers; that, all this well considered, it would appear that the French commerce might felicitate itself on an ideal loss, which would prove the



the source of a real gain ; and finally, that the advantages of this useful speculation would all centre in itself, since it could only be supported by the funds of the French merchants.

The minister's answer was, That he should have been happy to have entered into my views ; that he felt all the advantages of them ;—but, that he foresaw an invincible obstacle in the opposition of the trade —— !

It is difficult to conceive, Sir, why the government, which we ought to suppose always actuated by the love of the public good, does not protect, more efficaciously than it appears to do, the interests of the planter against the usurpations of the trade. And it is a usurpation, whenever you destroy the equilibrium which ought to exist between all articles of exchange, by forbidding me to raise the price of my commodity in the same proportion as you augment the value of yours. A single example will be sufficient.

To avoid fractions, I will suppose that the planter sold his coffee, ten years ago, at the rate of five sols a pound, to the trader, who paid him in negroes at the rate of five hundred livres \* a-piece. At

\* The price of a negro in 1700 was six hundred livres, of a negrefs four hundred and fifty.

present,

present, the highest price of coffee is from eighteen to twenty sols; that of a negro, from two thousand five hundred, to two thousand eight hundred livres. Thus, the trader who, to follow the proportion, and maintain the balance, should have merely quadrupled his price, has at least quintupled it; and consequently usurped a fifth.

We come now to what is here called Justice, of which I shall say but a word; for when you learn that the tribunal of Jaquemel, composed of a seneschal, of a deputy judge, of two attorney-generals, of a secretary, four counsellors, four or five attorneys, and as many tipstiffs, costs one year with another more than four hundred thousand livres, to the inhabitants of its little jurisdiction; you will easily comprehend, why cultivation languishes, and why the greater part of the planters, who owe constantly more than they are worth, vegetate in misery, crapulence, and sloth.

It would be superfluous to say any more on this head, unless you should think it necessary to know that the judges sit in a secular habit, with a sword by their side; and that Themis, in consideration of the extreme heat of the climate, instead of the thick bandage which covers her eyes elsewhere, plays at blindman's-buff here, with a light strip of transparent gauze over them. For the rest, you  
may



may be assured, that in estimating the expence of justice, I have rather gone below, than above, the truth: for I know more than one tipstaff here, who has picked up fifty or sixty thousand livres, by serving warrants, in what those facetious gentlemen are pleased to call, *productive years*.

Do not, however, Sir, suppose me so unjust as to wish to deprive commerce of its due share of influence on the habitual and general wretchedness of the colonies. It is an ingenious manœuvre, which does it too much honour to be suppressed; but which you will not comprehend unless I furnish you with the necessary documents. For this purpose it will be expedient to look back a little.

“ The colonies were established at the expence  
 “ of individuals: the history of each clearly proves  
 “ it.”\* It was neither then to the foresight, nor to the policy, nor to the humanity of sovereigns, that they owed their foundation, and least of all, that of Saint Domingo. It was to accident alone. Some Frenchmen, driven from Saint Kitts by the Spaniards, with other adventurers of their nation, together with a few English, found themselves on the western coast of St. Domingo, then uninhabited. They established themselves there in 1627, and

\* *Recherches sur les Etats-Unis d'Amérique.* Page 118.

were

were the original stock of the Flebustiers ; of those men, whose audacity in undertaking, whose prodigious courage in executing the most difficult enterprises, reduce to the level of childrens play, the fabulous exploits of the demi-gods of antiquity ; and whose ferocity occasioned one of their chiefs to be called MONBARS the EXTERMINATOR.

Disgusted with their vagabond and perilous mode of existence, some of these extraordinary men, of whom the greater part were English, betook themselves to the isle of Tortua \*, (which they had made their magazine in 1630, after driving away about five and twenty Spaniards) on the coast of Saint Domingo, where they joined themselves to the Buccaneers, a species of hunters, whose wandering and precarious habits of life, served the Flebustiers as an intermediate step in their passage from the state of sailors and soldiers, to that of planters.

\* At first occupied by the English in 1638, under the command of Willis. A French engineer of the name of Le Vasseur drove them out ; adopted, with the title of prince, the manners of a tyrant, and was assassinated by two of his nephews. Tortua then fell under the command of the Chevalier de Fontenay, who restored it to the Spanish ; when a third adventurer, Deschamps du Rauffet took it from them again in 1669, and five years afterwards, sold it to the West India Company. See Labat, *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles Françaises de L'Amérique*. Tom. 5. Chap. 6.



Two things which will always unite men in society closer together, the necessity of order, and of perpetuating themselves, determined these new inhabitants to ask for a chief, and for women. The government sent them at first Duparquet, and soon after Bertrand d'Ogeron de la Bouère, a gentleman of Angers, who arrived on the sixth of June 1636. He was succeeded by Ducasse, and L'Arnage; and the selection of these men, worthy in every respect to command others, proves that governments are not always deceived in the choice of those to whom they delegate a part of their power. "Mild and firm," says a modern historian, speaking of D'Ogeron, "patient and adroit; instructed by misfortune, and the habitude of living with this ferocious people; cherished by them, and respected by those above him, he was still superior to the opinion they had formed, I will not say of his virtues, but of his talents."\*

The choice of women was less difficult to make. France, at that time, abounded with poor, industrious, and modest females, whose sweet and ingenuous dispositions would have softened, nay, purified the morals of men, rather unformed than corrupted.

\* *Histoire Générale de l'Asie, de l'Afrique et de l'Amérique*, Tome 14.

What, Sir, did they do? They sent them prostitutes from the hospitals, abandoned wretches raked up from the mud of the capital, disgusting compounds of filth and impurity of the grossest kind. And it is astonishing to me, that their manners, as dissolute as their language, are not perpetuated in their posterity, to a greater degree than they really appear to be. The consideration of this event occasioned a voyager, as severe as correct, to say, that, “ except a few merchants, lately established  
 “ in the colonies, who have brought with them  
 “ their wives and children, and a decent and well  
 “ regulated set of domestics, we should do no  
 “ injury to the islands, in comparing them to  
 “ Rome, whose founders were a rude rabble of  
 “ rogues and whores, headed by two bastards.” \*

D'Ogeron had hardly collected together fifteen hundred inhabitants, before the officious Chamber of Commerce, by virtue of its exclusive privilege, that is, its power of starving the colonies †,

\* *Journal d'un Voyage aux Indes Orientales.* Tome 3.

† The funds of this company, which undertook the care of the colonies so early as 1649, amounted only to forty-five thousand livres! Now I would ask, if with so inadequate a stock, it be permitted to engage for the exclusive supply of a colony, unless with an express design to ruin it? And, indeed, the horrors it occasioned, sowed the seeds of that hatred which the colonists still entertain for the merchants of the mother country.



took advantage of the indifference of the minister for this infant establishment, and offered to furnish on credit what the other should have freely given; the supplies necessary to enable them to begin clearing the ground. The interest of these supplies, you may well imagine, was proportioned to the uncertainty and delay of a reimbursement founded intirely on the prospect of harvests to come. They came, indeed; but without easing the planters: for, while the ambition of extending their cultivation created new wants; the well-grounded hope of subjecting the buyer more and more to the feller, made the latter extremely ready to credit the former for whatever his necessities required.

Soon after the commencement of this traffic, the shrewd and dextrous merchant conceived the design of adding to the objects of necessity, the trifling appendages of luxury, always welcome to Vanity, who "thrusts herself into every society." The same vessel that carried out hatchets, and hoeing irons for the men, brought caps for the mothers, and farthingales for the daughters. The youthful Creole was easily persuaded that a looking-glass in a gilt frame reflected her pretty features more faithfully than the crystal of a fountain. Thus do ingenuous ignorance, and credulous self-love, purchase at a hundred times

their value\*, superfluities become necessities; while the wily merchant, who has just enough of metaphysics to know that the debtor seldom ventures to dispute with his creditor, fixes what price he pleases on the commodities he deigns to take in exchange; and thus acquires what may be truly called, the actual possession of the colonies.

To strengthen and support this oppressive measure, the Chamber of Commerce added three others, yet more so.

1°. The right of exclusively supplying the colonies.

\* I have seen a female Creole, who did not want sense, and who was more disposed to dupe others than to be duped herself; pay five Portugal pieces, that is, three hundred and thirty livres, for a pair of gold ear-rings which did not weigh thirty! To exculpate themselves from the reproach of the most detestable usury, the merchants will tell you that the uncertainty of commercial speculations, bankruptcies, ship-wrecks, post-duties, freightage, goods lying on hand, and long credits, do not permit them to bound their profits to the exact sums authorised by law. Be it so: but as it is a thing not altogether unknown, for a merchant, favoured by fortune, to amass millions, without experiencing any of those accidents, and even, in despite of them; I ask if he be not in conscience bound to return to each of his purchasers, the Judaical surplus which he has added to the legal price of his wares? If any man has ever known, or heard of such an instance of probity, I call on him to name the author.

2°. That



2°. That of being the sole exporters of their productions.

3°. A law which deprives the planters of the power of manufacturing their own cotton; for the purpose of compelling them to buy calicoes at an extravagant rate. These are always of the worst quality, that they may be the sooner worn out. For it is not enough to sell;—it is not enough to sell dear—No, the man who should content himself with these trifling advantages would pass for the dupe of his own honesty. The true merchant, the merchant, *par excellence*, or who at least, believes himself so, must go farther; he must sell as bad, that he may sell as often as possible. Yes, Sir, the Chamber of Commerce would erect a statue of gold, which should rival in bulk the colossus of Rhodes, to the man who should discover the happy art of composing calico of glass, and cloth of china ware!

To sum up all, Sir, nothing is wanting to put the last hand to the theory of its despotism over the colonies, but to add to the exclusive privilege of supplying them with flour, the exclusive privilege of baking their bread, and grinding their coffee.

What

What then, after all, is the true state of the connection between the merchant and the planter? God forbid I should insinuate that it is such as exists between the dupe and the cheat, between the tyrant and the slave\*!—No, I see things in a more favourable point of view.

The Chamber of Commerce is the true proprietor of Saint Domingo: the colonists are merely its tenants, precisely what the Romans used to call *Coloni Partiarum*. This is so true, and the trader, in particular, is so well convinced of it; that the planter who owes nothing, (if there be one of that description†) who pays for every thing with

\* See on this subject, “ *Reflexions sur la Colonie de Saint Domingo.*” Tom. 1. Chap. 2. pages 36 and 37. “ The French trader,” adds the author, Chap. 3. page 54, “ full at first, of zeal and complaisance, and eager to anticipate the desires of the planter, by whose labour he is enriched; becomes harsh, oppressive, and imperious after a little success; which, instead of redoubling his ardour to oblige, inspires him with the most ridiculous vanity. Presently he learns to consider the colony merely as an estate, whose produce is exclusively destined to be put into his hands, at whatever price he may name. Greedy to take advantage of the pressing wants of the planter, occasioned either by the scarcity of objects of the first necessity, or by an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances; he rarely fails to discover a disgraceful and avaricious inflexibility, which converts a useful and respectable employ into the basest of all professions.”

† I must be understood, to except those great proprietors, who having never seen their own estates, or the colonies, cannot come under the denomination of planters.

ready



ready money, and who can afford to wait till the number of competitors enables him to demand a reasonable price for his crops, is looked upon as a noxious animal, which it is the duty of the Chamber to hunt down. For *Messieurs* the merchants will tell you, and you may believe them if you please, that the profit of the exports from the colonies, scarcely defraying the expences of the freightage, they can only indemnify themselves by that of the imports: meanwhile, many a one of them, who carried a pack not twenty years ago, builds a palace, and marries *Mademoiselle* his daughter to a duke! But since our men of wit have turned calculators, and our princes taken to their bosoms the dregs of society; conversation, books, pamphlets, papers, theatres, every thing has been devoted to the praises of commerce. " 'Tis the corner stone of the monarchy! the nursing-father of the kingdom! the first, the most noble, the most useful of professions!" The sword of the warrior, the gown of the senator, nay, the very sceptre of the monarch, must bow down before the Caduceus of Mercury!

I honour, Sir, an honest merchant, as I esteem every honest man; but I confess I feel no great inclination to join the general enthusiasm, when I consider this nursing-father a little more nearly. A few visits to his counting house, will convince  
the

the most incredulous, that the motto of this generous benefactor of the human race, is, like that of too many others, " FIRST MYSELF—THEN THE  
" PUBLIC."

I will cite a fact which will give you a tolerable idea of the true nature of commerce. Raw sugar, which in 1682 sold for fourteen or fifteen livres the quintal, fell in 1713 to five or six: and yet this was precisely the moment the Senegal Company chose to raise the price of slaves to an enormous height! Some one has said before me, that  
" the destiny of the colonies is to serve for sport  
" to the caprice, for nourishment to the wants,  
" for pay to the cupidity of their mother-country,  
" of its exchequer, its excise, its *merchants*, its  
" companies, and its favourites in power!\*

Here is a planter, said I, a few days since, to a trading captain; who, at the winding up of your accounts, owes you a considerable sum: how could you find courage to open a fresh account with him? God forbid he should finally settle with me, replied the captain! Do you not see, that the easiness I appear to be under, with respect to what he owes me, secures me his next year's crop, and, what is more, secures it to me at the price I shall

\* *Histoire Générale de l'Asie, de l'Afrique, et de l'Amérique.*  
Tom. 15.



chuse to put upon it; since, by means of such a *trifling* condescension on his side, he is sure to find on mine a readiness to credit him for his future wants?—Ah! if you had but a spice of the merchant in you, you would soon see that the profession was rather a mutual intercourse of good offices, than any thing else!!!—And yet, Sir, in spite of this benevolence, very good judges will tell you, that to the impolitic and barbarous avidity of the first companies of commerce, and among others that known by the name of The Royal Company of Saint Domingo, created in 1698, we ought to attribute the state of languor in which this colony lay, till the final dissolution of an association of merchants, which, invested with all the prerogatives of sovereignty, and faithful to the spirit of trade, did not forget to comprehend in the calculations of its profits, the sale of every office, civil and military.

LET-

## LETTER XI.

*Jaquemel, May 1789.*

THE length of my last, Sir, startles me; but in proportion as I acquire a local knowledge of the country, my materials expand, my observations rise in rapid succession, and become so connected and interwoven with each other, that they do not always leave me the liberty of finishing where I wish.

You will not read in any of the voyagers who have written on this island, what you will find in my letters. Those who flatter all must needs please some; and the greater part seem to have taken up the pen more with this view than with any idea of instructing. For myself—who am not sufficiently attached to either of these motives, to sacrifice truth to it—I write to tell you what I see; what appears to me good, what bad, and what I think might be better. I proceed then as I began.

Taking it for granted that the district of Jaquemel will one day attain the degree of prosperity, of which it is susceptible; I know nothing so easy as to render the town the most agreeable and salutary residence on the coast.

Already



Already the inhabitants, stimulated by this laudable ambition, have procured a church from France; that is to say, the materials necessary to construct one; this they mean to erect in the centre of a large opening, formed by the meeting of the four principal streets: all that remains to be done on the spot, is the foundation, and the carpenter's work.

This erection will probably give you a high opinion of the piety of the colonists of our parish. Do not, however, be apprehensive that it will attain the degree of zeal, which constitutes fanaticism! He who loves to "*wander in unfrequented places*," may enter the churches of Saint Domingo without fear: he will not find there

" *Les degrés de l'autel usés par la prière.*"

Fronting the façade of the temple, there will be an esplanade, planted with trees, and extended quite to the foot of the mountain; from whence the eye may take in at one view, the bay, the adjacent country, and a wide expanse of sea.

The inconvenience of being obliged to fetch water from a river, more than half a mile to the west of the town, has given birth to an idea of constructing, in the centre of the proposed esplanade, a public fountain; to be supplied with water  
from

from the neighbouring mountain, by means of a canal, which can be cut at no great expence.

Such is the project. If it be executed, it will not be with any extraordinary celerity. Good, you know, always travels with the pace of a tortoise.—Meanwhile, I see no great evil in proposing another plan, full as useful, and less costly in the execution.

The distance of the river obliges the inhabitants to take the negroes from their more profitable labour, to employ them in bringing water, of which a vast quantity is consumed by the baths, so necessary in a country like this.

The river, or rather the torrent of *Goffeline*, descends rapidly from the side of the mountain which looks towards the sea: at some distance from Jaquemel it forms an acute angle, and running for a short time parallel to the shore, falls into the *great river*, not far from its mouth.

What can be more simple than to form a new bed for it, from the place where it turns short round, which shall conduct it in a straight line to the port? This operation, to which the nature of the ground opposes no obstacle, would bring water to the door of every house, carry off the filth, whose corruption infects the air, and form a canal, whose borders



ders might be planted with one or more rows of orange trees. Such a plantation would be attended with a double advantage: it would temper the fierceness of the atmosphere, and refresh the sight, wearied with the everlasting prospect of a soil, at once arid, glowing, and dusty.

I can see but one objection to this project;—that of its inutility, on the supposition that the town itself may hereafter approach the acclivities of the mountain. To this I reply, that the facility of disembarking, the proximity of the vessels, and the desire of employing as few hands as possible, which make it so expedient for the captains to have their warehouses on the shore, will always render it necessary to have a lower town, which they may call, if they please, the PORT, the MERCHANT'S QUARTER;—and which, having a fresher air, and a more lively and agreeable aspect, will be resorted to by traders in preference to any other spot.

As I am now engaged in the career of projects, I cannot, Sir, in my quality of a military man, decently dispense with a few observations on the means of defence I think this town possessed of.—But I must first point out to you the propriety of making it defensive.

Saint

Saint Domingo has no strong place on the south. The country, indeed, is difficult ; yet with secrecy and speed, an active enemy might effect a descent on that side, and make himself master of the defiles, and heights of the mountains ; he would then be enabled to take Léogane and Port-au-Prince, in the rear, before a sufficient number of troops could be assembled to check his progress. Let us suppose this attack to be seconded by a squadron, which should block up Port-au-Prince, and menace it on the sea side ; and this important place would be immediately cut off from all communication with the neighbouring district, and from every hope of succour.

It is, then, essential to possess on the southern side, a fortified post, from whence we may watch the enemy ; where our cruisers may find an asylum in case of necessity, and which may serve as a rallying point to the troops charged with the defence of the coasts.

Jaquemel has every thing necessary for these different objects. The sweeping line which forms the bay, offers to the east and west, most excellent positions for the construction of batteries, nay, of forts, which might keep up a cross-fire on the enemy. In the centre of the bottom of the bay, is a small, insulated eminence, in the form of a  
parallelogram,



parallelogram, on which stand at present a church, and a few houses: this spot seems designed by nature for the erection of a regular fortification, since it would admit of the construction of casemates, and, being neither too high, nor too low, would be very little exposed to the enemy's fire, while its own would be joined, without obstacle, to that of the forts in the road. If to these means of defence, there were to be added an entrenched camp, for which there are many excellent situations, I should conceive this part of the island to be perfectly secure from every attempt at invasion.

The rage of rising into notice by opinions which are supposed to be new, because they are singular, has lately given birth to a military sect, which, with a considerable degree of theory and talents, but no experience, declaims incessantly against the system of strong places! It is natural enough that the desire of seeing its opinions adopted, should incline it to exaggerate the imperfections, and dissemble the advantages of the system it professes to combat.

The true defence of a frontier, say these speculators, consists in the art of positions. Who disputes it? But if this art can call another to its aid, and if the combination of the two, double the means of resistance, what necessity is there to separate

rate them? Ought I to cut off the left hand which parries the strokes of my adversary, because I attack with the right? Let us not adopt or reject either of the systems exclusively. It is for circumstances, and the nature of the ground, to decide whether a frontier ought or ought not to be fortified.

But courage, Sir!—although a soldier, I shall not carry my military speculations any farther. Without blaming what has been done, I have fallen into a reverie for a moment, on what remains to do for the happiness and safety of this coast.

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## LETTER XII.

*Jaquemel,*  
*May 1789.*

I HAVE determined, Sir, to give you a description of *one of my days*; it will be the simplest method of giving you, once for all, a summary idea of the manner of living at Saint Domingo, in what is called a town.

When



When the poets of America are about to chant the praises of a beauty, fresh, blooming, ruby-complexioned—they must be not a little embarrassed to find comparisons; for here we have no Aurora. A single glance on the terrestrial globe will explain this phenomenon to you, as well as that of the warmth dispensed by the star of night: a warmth so sensible as to oblige me to pull my hat over my eyes whenever I sit, or walk by moonlight.—With respect to the sun, he is as much out of the question as Aurora: for what daring mortal, though he had all the snow of the Alps upon his head, and all the ice in his heart, could hope to sustain, within a few degrees of the line, a single glance from his “*bel asire?*”

Nothing then is left us but the rose.—What will surprize you, perhaps, is, that she is as beautiful, as lively, and as richly tinged here as in Europe; but, alas! more transitory: hence, of all the precepts of that ingenious gallantry which we call love, no one is more religiously observed here, than “*Youth is brief, haste to enjoy it.*”

Thus, Sir, no twilight, no loitering dawn, no dusk, no evening slowly deepening its shades,—all is precipitation; the day springs from the night like Pallas from the head of Jove:—it is the *fiat lux* of the creation.—How beautiful an hour is lost!

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And nothing to recompence us for the privation ! The cracking of whips, the smothered cries, and the indistinct groans of the negroes, who never see the day break but to curse it ; who are never recalled to a feeling of their existence, but by sufferings—this, Sir, is what takes place of the crowing of the early cock ; and by the strains of this infernal harmony, was I awakened out of my first sleep at Saint Domingo.—I started, screamed, and fancied that I had waked in the gulph of Tartarus, between Prometheus and Ixion - - - And I was among CHRISTIANS ! Among the worshippers of a God - - - who died to mitigate the sorrows of the afflicted !—Custom has already weakened the effect of the impression ; it will never obliterate it altogether.

A walk of an hour served to dissipate the chagrin of this gloomy awaking. I came back in time to see a troop of male and female negroes lying against the wall, or squatting upon their heels, and waiting, amidst a universal yawn, for the master's giving the signal of going to work, by loud cracks of the *Arceau* \*, on their back and shoulders—for, you will hardly conceive, and indeed it cost six months observation to convince me of the truth of it, there are negroes who must absolutely be beaten before

\* A kind of short-handled whip, so called in the colonies.

they



they can be put in motion. The arceau is the true key of this species of watch—If I had chosen to take the word of the masters for it, I should have looked no farther for the cause of this singular disposition of the slaves, than to their natural sloth and inactivity: but on considering the matter a little more narrowly, I fancied I could see that these dispositions were marvellously seconded by the inactivity and sloth of their masters, who, for the greater part, too ignorant and too unindulgent to comprehend that the vices of education can only be subdued by time and patience, find the plan of beating more practicable than that of instructing! The natural consequence of which is, that the negro, once accustomed to this mode of treatment, can only be wrought on by rigour and severity. I have persisted, month after month, in lavishing on those who attended me, nothing but patience, gentleness, and good offices of every kind - - - all were in vain: the bent was taken, and nothing was left me, after all my endeavours, but the alternative of waiting on myself, or of having recourse to the *arceau*.

They breakfast here about eight o'clock: this repast is usually made up of the meat and fruits of the country.

The idle have scarcely any other resource to fill up the interval between breakfast and dinner, but

writing, reading, or *ennui*: this is mine. The active employ it in business, walking, chatting, when they have any thing to converse on, or in *ennui*.

About noon I go into the bath; immediately after which, I sit down to dinner. Many people accustom themselves to sleep after eating: it is no bad method of killing the time which hangs so heavy on their hands; but I have not yet adopted it. Nights of twelve hours are sufficiently long for me. I walk in the gallery, I converse, when I can find any one to join me, I read, or—I grow stupid.

From six in the morning to three in the afternoon, the heat would be insupportable, were it not tempered by the sea breeze, which blows during the greatest part of this period. From whence comes it? and why does it blow in the morning from one point of the compass, and in the evening from another? Look into the "*Theory of the Winds*" for what the author says on the subject: for me,—I take refuge in the Theory of Ignorance: satisfied with the enjoyment, I shall not, while the breeze refreshes me, foolishly inflame my blood by attempting to discover whence it comes, and whither it goes. But what, you will say, do you mean by the gallery you lately spoke of?—This is  
to



to call upon me for the plan of a colonial *casa*, or dwelling-house.

A long square, of an arbitrary extent, is divided into three, by two partitions which run the whole length of it; each of these divisions is more or less wide, according to the fancy of the proprietor; but the middle one is generally the widest. This is left intire; but the two others, are subdivided at pleasure, into two or more chambers. A gallery usually runs along each front, either open or inclosed with lattice-work, breast high. One of the chambers is the eating, the other the drawing room, unless the company choose to remain in the middle and largest division. The galleries of the *casas* of a certain size, terminate in closets, of which some serve for pantries, sculleries, &c. and others for sleeping rooms; these are commonly appropriated to strangers.

The dread of earthquakes has, for a long time, occasioned the houses to be built of only one story: they have now begun to build them of two. The walls are formed of square stakes, of an equal thickness, covered with planks on the outside, or with a thin coat of mason's work. They have a great number of windows, but none of them glazed: the reflexion of the glass would render the heat intolerable. Its place is supplied by lattices, or canvases

vass blinds, which break and diminish the too powerful glare of day, and which, if they had but the good sense to paint them green, would admit into the rooms a soft and refreshing light - - - but this is what no one has yet thought of. The same reason, and the violence of the hurricanes, prevent them from covering their roofs with tiles or slates : instead of these, they make use of *issents*, which are thin planks, cut into the necessary size.

Such is the house of the rich. The rest have the same interior division, but no mason's work between the stakes, no galleries, no closets, no lattice work, and what is worse, no floor. The poor inhabitants tread on the bare ground, which swarms with insects, and sleep on the roof. They have shutters for windows :—wind, sun, dust, rain, and innumerable multitudes of ants, penetrate through the chinks, which are purposely left to admit the light. When evening comes, every thing is thrown open ; then legions of beetles, musquitoes, and other winged insects, rush into the houses, attracted by the glare of the candles, which they would instantly extinguish, if the inhabitants had not the precaution to place them under glasses constructed for the purpose.

If a more enlightened architecture has not yet introduced the art of varying the forms, and multiplying



tipling the conveniences of the buildings ; still less must you expect to find in the furnishing of them (I speak of those of the rich) that taste so superior to magnificence. They have all damask tapestry, and gilt rods ! the damask tapestry appears to me just as suitable here as a gauze dress would be in Norway, in the depth of winter. Taste, Sir, is still Creolian at Saint Domingo ; and, unfortunately, the Creolian is not the right taste—it smells too much of the *Boucan*. \*

The kitchens do not join the houses : the negligence of the negroes would render the junction too dangerous. They are, therefore, removed to a reasonable distance. The majority of the inhabitants of the towns have no kitchen ; they kindle a fire, and dress their meat in the open air.

The tables are ill furnished. Butchers meat is bad ; poultry, with the exception of the Pintado, not much better. The pork is excellent, and so is the game, which consists of *maroon*, or wild hogs,

\* So they originally called the dwellings of the Buccaneers. This species of men have disappeared ; but the names they imposed on places remain, as may be seen by consulting the map of Saint Domingo. There you will find numbers of *Boucans*, and of *trous*, (holes) such as *Trou margot*, *Sale-trou*, &c. These low and vulgar denominations shew to what kind of men the colony owes its origin. It is still common to use the verb *bouconer* for *rotir*, to roast.

and

and of wood pigeons, extremely dear, and extremely difficult to meet with. Sea fish does not abound, and is confined to three or four sorts; fresh water fish is still more scarce.

You see, then, Sir, that Plato could not decently make the same reproaches to the colonists of Saint Domingo, which he made to the inhabitants of Sicily, "that they ate as if they had not an hour to live, and built as if they were never to die,"

With respect to vegetables, they are better here than in Europe, but not so various, nor so abundant. The country furnishes a species of spinage, with which they make those *calaloux*, so much vaunted by the Creoles, and which are certainly delicious. To these they sometimes add the buds of pimento, and garlick.

But the most delicious of all vegetables is the palm-cabbage. Unfortunately, there is no method of getting at it but by cutting down the tree on which it grows; and this tree, extremely slow in coming to maturity, is one of the most valuable possessions of the inhabitants. It is in allusion to this process, of which several travellers have spoken, without alledging the necessity of it, that Montesquieu compares the despot to the savage "who  
" cu ts



“ cuts down the tree to gather the fruit.” \* You see, Sir, how ill the simile applies.

The Creoles will never forgive me for passing over in silence the *ignama*, the *choux-caraibe*, or Indian kale, the *patate*, and above all their dear *banana*. This fruit, of which every voyager has spoken, is common to Asia, Africa, and South America: it is the true manna of these three quarters of the globe. The inhabitants of Madeira have not the least doubt but that the banana was the forbidden fruit; and indeed its form bears a striking analogy to that of which the gluttony of Eve made us pay so dearly the digestion! Hence the libertine muse of the Ovids of the colony, introduces the banana as often as possible, as the object of comparison, in her amatory couplets; always a little licentious, but full of naïveté and of grace.

This encroachment on the province of maitre d'hôtel must have appeared to you, I suspect, a little tedious. I shall, therefore, remit you for the description of the *ignama*, the *patate*, and the *choux-caraibe* to the pages of natural history, and content myself with observing (what proves these three productions not to be natives of St. Domingo, as most people imagine) that they are never found

\* *De l'Esprit des Lois*, Liv. 4. Chap. 13.

in the uncultivated parts of the island; with the exception of a sort of wild ignama, by no means common. The same observation may be applied to the fruits, such as the anana, the sweet orange, the sapatilla, &c. The only fruit trees to be found in the woods, are the goyavier, the bitter orange, and the lemon-tree, whose fruit, about the size of a pigeon's egg, is full of juice.

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LETTER XIII.

*Jaquemel,*  
May 1789.

I HAVE divided my day, Sir, into two parts, that it may not appear quite so long to you, as to me.

I left, I think, all but myself asleep;—they get up, I quit my book, and we spend the rest of the afternoon as we can until the rays of the sun, less perpendicular, permit us to take advantage of the breeze which rarely fails to rise about five or six o'clock; but not with the degree of exactness some voyagers



voyagers assign it, since there are days when it does not blow at all.

This is the time for walking abroad, and above all for visiting. I undoubtedly prefer the former, because I have more need of using my legs than my tongue. Both these pleasures have their inconveniences. The hour for stirring out is precisely that which the musquitoes choose for their evening perambulation. This insect, which, as the author of the History of Louisiana \* gravely remarks, "has acquired a prodigious reputation throughout America;" gives a decided preference to new comers, whose blood, less impoverished, is supposed to yield it a more delicious nourishment. This distinction, whatever the motive of it may be, is extremely troublesome to those who are honoured with it, and who cannot, with all their efforts, escape from the sting of the perfidious animal. You must be seasoned, that is to say, have passed six months at least, at Saint Domingo, before you can hope to be delivered from this pest.

Nearly the same period must elapse before you can be familiarized to the style of, what is called Society; especially if you land with the expectation of finding it here, what you left it in Europe. As

\* See "*Histoire de la Louisiane.*" Tome 2. Chap. 4.

all are, or pretend to be, planters, it is extremely natural that each should dwell on what interests him most: so that they have scarcely ceased to speak of their negroes, their cotton, their sugar, and their coffee, ere they begin anew on their coffee, their sugar, their cotton, and their negroes!

For a stranger, who lands here with a view of acquiring information in the succinctest way, nothing can be so desirable as these eternal conversations: it is not always that the opinions coincide, it may sometimes happen that both parties are equally wrong; but as the collision of two errors frequently elicits sparks of truth, an attentive listener cannot fail to profit by them.

You will readily imagine that each brings to the meeting his proportion of claims: but on what do you suppose them to be founded? on the extent of his possessions? on the advantages cultivation has derived from his wisdom and experience? on the reputation his conduct has obtained him amongst his neighbours?—No, Sir, on none of these, but on the species of commodity he raises! So that the cultivator of coffee, never fails to return to the cultivator of cotton the contempt with which he is heard by the cultivator of sugar. The *number* of negroes too, has no inconsiderable influence on the degree of consideration to which it is permitted to  
aspire;



aspire ; since they reckon by negroes here, as they do by tons of gold in Holland. “ He has *one, two, three* hundred negroes ! ” — This is saying every thing ; the wit of man can add nothing to this eulogium.

The free intercourse of sexes, which forms in the old world one of the first charms of society, when neither of them usurps the characteristics of the other, adds nothing here to its pleasures. The European ladies seldom see the Creoles but to ridicule them, especially when they have not been educated in France ; and these, in their turn, see little in the others but creatures of affectation and folly ; — while the men, who seldom find, and above all in the former, the degree of *sensibility* on which the mulatto ladies pique themselves, leave both to lament, amongst themselves, the decline of the ancient good breeding, and the depravity of the tastes of our sex.

The languor which this monotonous mode of existence flings on the commerce of life, is neither relieved by instruction, nor by talents, nor even by a love of reading. Several of the colonists, to excuse, in some measure, their ignorance, have had the disingenuity to give out, on their return to France, that it is impossible to preserve books in Saint Domingo. We have been simple enough to believe

believe them, and our writers have been actively employed in propagating this foolish story, as a most extraordinary circumstance. You may trust me, Sir, when I assure you, that the only thing extraordinary in the matter is the facility with which people have given credit to so palpable a falsehood !

I have here a variety of books, bound and unbound, which are as free from injury now as they were on the day of my arrival. It is true I took care of them; but this care is necessary every where: since every where, books, which are carelessly thrown aside, and left in the dirty corners of garrets and cock-lofts, a prey to dust and moisture, become, as they do here, the food of moths and worms. In fine, the true way to preserve books here, as well as elsewhere, is to read them. And after all, what kind of books do you suppose they usually import? I can assure you that "*Margot la Ravadeuse*," is one of the most decent. This will convince you that however neglected these productions of filth and obscenity may be, they are still less devoured by worms than their readers by the corruption they engender.

It is usually after sun-set that those dances take place among the people of colour; dances, in which the females more especially, discover such justness  
of



of ear, such precision of movement, and such volubility of reins, that the quickest eye can with difficulty seize a few shades of the rapid and fugitive developement of their lascivious graces.

Of these dances, which may be truly styled characteristic, the *Gragement* and the *Chicca* are the most esteemed : never did voluptuousness in motion spread a more seducing snare for the eager and insupportable love of pleasure : - - - Hence, *to dance the chicca*, is considered as the supreme good ; and I confess, with no little confusion, that the austerity of my principles never prevailed so far as to interdict me from the enjoyment of this singular spectacle, as often as it was in my power.

The orchestra is composed of one or two fiddlers, much superior for the talents which their occupation requires, to the majority of our European scrapers. They have still another advantage over them ; that of never being the passive instruments of the pleasure of others, for they enter so deeply into the spirit of the entertainment, that the part of their body which is seated, moves in perfect unison with the foot that beats the measure, and the hand that conducts the bow.

These female mulattoes, who dance so exquisitely, and who have been painted to you in such  
seducing

seducing colours, are the most fervent priestesses of the American Venus. They have reduced voluptuousness to a kind of mechanical art, which they have carried to the highest point of perfection. In their seminaries Aretine himself would be a simple and modest scholar !

They are, generally speaking, above the middle size, perfectly well formed, and so extremely supple in their limbs, that they appear as if they had a swinging in their gait. They join to the inflammability of nitre, a petulance of desire, which, in despite of every consideration, incessantly urges them to pursue, seize, and devour pleasure, as the flame devours its aliment ; while, on every other occasion, these furious Bacchantes who would madly rush on the palpitating remains of the wretched Orpheus \*, scarcely seem to have strength enough to drag along their limbs, or articulate their words.

It is from these women that the housekeepers are usually taken ; that is to say, the acknowledged mistresses of the greatest part of the unmarried whites. They have some skill in the management of a family, sufficient honesty to attach themselves invariably to one man, and great goodness of heart.

\* See the conclusion of the Fourth Book of the Georgics.



More than one European, abandoned by his selfish brethren, has found in them all the solicitude of the most tender, the most constant, the most generous humanity, without being indebted for it to any other sentiment than benevolence.

Their conversation, when it is not licentious, is insipid, which is not so much their fault as that of the men who frequent them. Susceptible of delicate feelings, they want nothing perhaps, to be completely amiable, but the degree of instruction necessary to enable them to turn to the advantage of the genius and the heart, that excess of sensibility which they abuse, for want of knowing how to vary its use. On this subject, however, I wish to refer to such as have entered into connections with them, with sufficient discernment to judge—for my own part I freely confess, that I do not now speak from experience.

If beauty can exist independent of the freshness, the bloom, and the hue of the carnation, there are beautiful mulattoes: and yet it will not be easy to find many of them who, to eyes regularly fine, join an expression which renders them still more so; if they atone for the want of this perfection, by the delicate whiteness of their teeth, what have they to supply the deficiency of coral lips, of those charms in detail, of that contrast of shades, which,

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from

from the amiable suffusion that crimsons over the cheek of ingenuous modesty, to the interesting paleness that betrays the deep sensibility of unrequited affection, are an inexhaustible source of beauties!

The female mulattoes are adroit, but indolent: those who join a spirit of œconomy to their other talents seldom fail of acquiring a fortune. They will employ a whole month in making a shirt, but then it will be the perfection of needle-work. They love expensiveness in dress; it is a tribute to their beauty: but you must not implicitly trust to the enthusiastic encomiums you will sometimes hear on their magnificence. Their favourite coiffure is an India handkerchief, which is bound round the head: the advantages they derive from this simple ornament are inconceivable; they are the envy and despair of the white ladies, who aspire to imitate them, and who do not see that it is impossible for strong and glaring colours, calculated to animate the monotonous and livid hue of the mulatto, to harmonize with the alabaster and the roses of Europe! They shew a taste sufficiently correct in the choice of the stuffs in which they dress, and the trinkets with which they adorn themselves, and which consist of little more than ear-rings, either gold or enamelled. More nicety and attention to  
the



the toilet would ill comport with their natural carelessness.

If this portrait should chance to differ from those you have seen elsewhere, you will please to remember, Sir, that I sketch it on the spot, that the model is before my eyes, and that I have neither the talent nor the ambition of amusing you with pictures of ideal beauties.

I leave this place in a few days, to go and establish myself in a settlement, where I shall find a new order of things. My taste for the country and for solitude, makes me impatient for the moment when I may give myself up to them entirely. The place I am going to has been hitherto neglected in every point: this will open a vast field to my industry, and enable me, in some measure, to correct by experience the theoretical knowledge I have already acquired.

## LETTER XIV.

*Desert,  
July 1789.*

I HAVE been in no great haste to write to you, Sir, since my arrival at the DESERT, so I call my present habitation. I have therefore so many things to say to you, that I scarcely know where to begin.

We set out from Jaquemel : Madame de L \* \* \*, her daughter, and her nurse, in a carriage ; one male, three female negroes, and a negro child, on foot, and myself on horseback.

We followed for a league and a half the steep and winding valley, through which the torrent which gives name to the quarter of *Goffeline*, forces its way. This space presented us now with a few plantations, of which none, a single sugar one excepted, appeared of any importance ; and now with woods skirting the mountains sides, and here and there interrupted by a patch of pasture ground called a Savanna.

If this extent of country were as well peopled as it ought to be, and if the proprietors knew only  
how



how to take advantage of the charming situations the ground affords, to place their dwelling houses, it is certain that even this slight combination of art with nature would render the aspect of the whole extremely lively and agreeable; which is far from being the case at present.

This negligence may be attributed, in the first place, to a want of taste not uncommon in the country; and, in the second, to a default which I scarcely know how to define, but to which it is undoubtedly owing that Saint Domingo, instead of citizens, can only boast of transitory visitors, who are more intent on providing the means of quitting it, than on furnishing themselves with the requisites for spending there an agreeable and happy life.

This default, which, happily, is not that of the other colonies, will for ever render a residence in this the more unpleasant, as the disagreeable circumstances of every kind to which the climate and the nature of slavery subject the inhabitants, are not counterpoised by any of the advantages which a mutual and friendly intercourse procures the inhabitants of every other place. In the spot where I reside, the neighbours hardly know one another: pretensions either ill-founded or ridiculous; jealousies of each other's fortune, more ridiculous still; disputes about boundaries which could not  
exist

exist if the surveyors, who are most extravagantly paid \*, understood their business better; and finally, trespasses committed by the negroes, or the cattle, occasion such a misunderstanding, or such a coolness, that all reciprocal communication is out of the question. Consequently, as nothing is so savage as the recluse who is not so by choice; nor so tenacious of his claims as he who is conscious they are unfounded; you must not be surprised that each owl rests in his hole, and that so little sociability reigns amongst men who have few or no sociable qualities.

It was not so heretofore. When a new settlement was forming, the distance from the ports, the paucity of inhabitants, the pleasure of seeing their countrymen arrive amongst them, the remembrance of the assistance they had received from others, formed between those already established, and those about to establish themselves, a mutual interchange of good offices; this produced a connection, whose basis was laid by want and curiosity, and cemented by habitude.

It was then that far-famed hospitality reigned here, which is now vanished, with the causes that gave it birth. Things are much changed. In the

\* The laying out each Concession costs about three thousand livres.



old districts, the inhabitants no longer fly to meet the new comer with all the eagerness of joy ; they no longer receive him with the frank cordiality of former times. Even neighbours rarely meet but by accident. If you are on a journey, you are received, indeed, but no longer with open arms : if you want horses to proceed, you must ask for them - - - formerly they were offered, they were forced upon you - - - now, pretences are sought for a refusal ! Your host will be “ *very glad* ” to see you arrive, but he will be “ *quite charmed* ” to see you depart.

I have pointed out to you, Sir, one of the causes of this revolution ; the others may be easily divined, when you consider how much the manners are influenced by riches, and how rare it is to find a man who can feel for wants which he does not himself experience.

This digression has led me out of my way ; it is time to return to it.

When we had arrived at the foot of the mountains, we found the road impassable for carriages : Madame de L \* \* \* was therefore obliged to alight, and get on horseback ; and the negro women carried the children by turns.

These

These mountains have no very flattering appearance : wherever they are not covered with wood, their abrupt acclivities present a barren surface of greyish turf, or sand stone ; a certain proof, they tell me, that there is gold below - - - thus, this destructive metal impoverishes the earth which conceals it ! the sign of our wealth is distinguished by sterility ! and the strong box of nature resembles that of the miser ! \*

This forbidding tone of colour, joined to the confused and fantastic manner in which these incoherent masses are thrown together, gives them an air of decrepitude and decay, which presents the painful image of universal disorder and desolation. This part of the new world has such an antiquated appearance, that I should not hesitate, if I could

\* It is not a little extraordinary to see the author of such a work as the *Etudes de la Nature*, labouring to deprive Saint Domingo of the wretched advantage of containing gold mines. " The whole truth is," says he (Tome 2. p. 244) that when " Columbus discovered the Antilles he found the natives possessed " of some pieces of this metal in a very impure state ; these they " had obtained in the way of barter from the inhabitants of the " continent, for there were no mines on the islands." If M. de Saint Pierre will deign to look a little into their history, he will find that in Saint Domingo alone, the mines of Cibao have furnished more gold than Europe at present has in circulation. How can we suppose, then, that people who had such rich mines at home, and who, at the time they were discovered, were not possessed of the most paltry boat, should go, and traffic for gold on the continent ?

once



once adopt the system of Thales, to assert that St. Domingo preceded, by some ages, the other productions of the ocean.

From the foot of the mountain to the *Desert*, the distance is about three miles: these we passed, by creeping along its sinuosities, in a narrow path, or track, ill laid out, and worse kept; which sometimes brought us to the extreme verge of a precipice, and sometimes more fortunately to a sheltered spot, where our panting caravan might take breath.

The first view of the Desert did not quite transport us. - - - A slope for drying coffee, a husk, or pulping-mill, a large casa in ruins, two small ones, one intended for the kitchen, the other for the residence of the overseer, in the same condition: a lime-kiln, something that was once a garden, a pigeon house tottering on four stakes; the whole jumbled together, without choice, without order, without combination in a tunnel, from whence the eye could catch but one view! Such, Sir, is the portrait of our abode, drawn from nature: add to it a dozen negro huts perched on the sharp ridge of one of the jutting eminences of the mountain, and the picture will be complete.

We found the ground floor of the large casa (of which you already know the plan) so undermined  
by

by rats, that we sunk to the knees at every step : it was necessary to unpave it and fill up the abyfs with fresh earth. Madam de L \* \* \*, accustomed to the elegant accommodations of Paris, although previously informed of the condition in which she would find her *country seat*, had some difficulty to suppress her tears at the view of the kind of Thebaïd she was about to inhabit. “ Be of good heart,” said I to her ; “ I have not the wand of Armida ; but with trees, water, labour, and the vegetation of Saint Domingo, if I do not change the Desert into an elysium, I will at least engage to render it supportable.”

A fault, common to all who begin a settlement, is the cutting down of every tree within two hundred yards of their establishment ; which is thus exposed to the double action of the sun, and the reverberations of a foil, which, stripped of all its shade, sends forth a warmth, equal to that of the mouth of an heated oven.

This blundering method of proceeding is justified, like every other absurdity, by false or inconclusive reasons. The planters say that the great difficulty of transporting building materials makes it necessary to use such as are on the spot ; that the ravages of hurricanes would render the vicinity of trees dangerous, &c. You see clearly, Sir, that the



the first of these reasons is merely an apology for their indolence and want of foresight ; the second, for their stupidity ; since, to preserve the buildings from danger by the fall of trees, nothing more would be necessary than to take their elevation, and measure on the ground the distance at which they might be suffered to remain with safety.

On the day of my arrival, I observed with singular satisfaction, that a most beautiful avocetier \* had escaped the ax of the barbarians, precisely on the spot which the nature of the ground, and the neighbourhood of water, strongly marked out for embellishment. The next morning, the first object that struck me on opening my eyes, was the avocetier stretched at its length in the dust ! I flew to announce this enormity to the overseer - - - it was himself who had committed it ! This charming tree had been cut down for railing, to enclose a few goats - - - and within two hundred paces of the spot, there was timber enough to construct a royal navy !

I give you this anecdote as a proof of what I have just asserted.

\* See a description of this tree and its fruit in the "*Nouveau Voyage aux Isles Françaises de l'Amérique.*" Tome 1. Chap. 14.

We

We had sent before us a large quantity of poultry of every kind ; at our arrival almost all was gone ! The turkeys, which the Jesuits seem only to have domesticated for themselves, had again run wild ; the hens, abandoned to their instinct, were dispersed about the coffee plantations, where they laid their eggs, brooded and roosted : and where their eggs, their chickens, and themselves became the prey of rats, snakes, and negroes. The ducks shared the same fate.

When I expostulated with the overseer on his negligence, he replied, that he had done nothing but what was customary, and that the looking after poultry would *interrupt* the negroes, that is, take them off from more essential occupations. I told him that we ought to correct a bad custom by a good one ; that the present was calculated to starve us ; that the most essential part of the negroes occupation was to enable us to live, before we thought of enriching ourselves, &c.

Full of this persuasion, I immediately set myself to remedy the disorder. I patched up an old hen-roost, collected all the poultry I could during the night, and shut them up in it for some days. Our stock is already considerably increased : the hens, who lay without intermission, sit two or three times a year ; and we have eggs and pullets in abundance.

The



The overseer begins to acknowledge that I was right; and I can read in the satisfied air of the cocks, that they think themselves obliged to me for having established order and good government in their seraglio.

With respect to the *élèves* of the Society of Jesus—by a refinement in delicacy, of which you will scarcely believe me capable, I have left them in the woods, because a state of nature mightily improves the flavour of their flesh. When we are in want of game, I take my gun, go into the coverts, and bring home a turkey, just as a sportsman, with you, does a snipe, or a woodcock.

The sight of the dove-house, though in a state of actual decay, immediately rekindled my ancient passion for that branch of rural œconomy. I flew to the assistance of the friends of my youth; lavished on them all the care which the neatness and salubrity of their dwelling seemed to demand, and gave myself up to the employ, with all the interest attached to an amusement that recalled the memory of scenes most dear to my heart.

LET-

## LETTER XV.

*Desert,  
August 1789.*

IF my own feelings could dictate a thought which might not accord with your happiness, I should have been tempted, Sir, to have wished you here at the reception of your packet, that you might have been a witness of the joy it occasioned. The day of its arrival was solemnized as a festival; the negroes were dismissed from work, regaled with salt meat, and brandy, and permitted to dance a *Calenda*—without ever suspecting that it was to a letter from Paris they owed all this indulgence. Let them dance on! while I, to satisfy your curiosity, employ the day in bringing you acquainted with them.

You do not venture to reproach me for not having already done it, and you are right: many a man has supposed that a residence of some months was sufficient to know them, and has in consequence of it, undertaken to draw their portrait with a degree of assurance that has even imposed on those who have lived whole years in the midst of this species of men—lived, it must be confessed, as a wood-cutter in the midst of a forest; without seeing any thing



thing but wood in the different species of trees which compose it !

The least precipitate and rash of those painters, however, have distinguished the African negro from the Creole ; and this distinction, absolutely necessary, is certainly some proof of judgment.

My business will be with the first. He is the true negro : the other is but the black and mischievous ape of his master ; whose vices alone he copies. A slave—what has he to do with the virtues of a man ?

“ Abominable Christians !” cries Voltaire, “ the  
“ negroes you sell for twelve hundred livres a-  
“ piece, are worth twelve hundred times as much  
“ as yourselves !” \*

If this is not the only exaggeration, it is beyond doubt the most extravagant of all those we owe to the bilious humanity of this great but mischievous man.

The negro, Sir, is much more difficult to define than you would suppose. To do it well we should study him in the different periods of his life ; we

\* *Oeuvres Complètes. Tome 58. Lettre 124.*

should

should know if he was, in Africa, free, or enslaved, rich or poor, hunter, husbandman, fisher, pastor, priest, artist or warrior.

We should see him in his native soil, in his own house : follow him into the habitudes of his private life, into the bosom of his family, under the influence of the government, the laws, the religion, the prejudices of his country ; we should make ourselves acquainted with his social dependencies, his tastes, his regimen, his employments, his pleasures, and his pains.

We should then compare his present state with his past ; observe the influence of transplantation on his temperament, on his ideas, on his humour, and on the degree of sensibility of which he is susceptible.

Even this is not enough : we should distinguish what belongs to the species in general, from the particular character of the individual ; and examine whether he has left in his own country a father, mother, wife, children, friends ; we should narrowly search into the impression which the certitude of being torn for ever from all that was dear to him may have made upon his mind ; and, added to all this, Sir, if we wish to judge with any tolerable degree of accuracy, we must absolutely separate

rate



rate the man of circumstances, from the man of nature and education.

This is no easy task : I doubt whether it was ever yet performed ; and I am certain it never will by me, who suspect that I have already undertaken a work above my strength, in merely hazarding this simple outline.

One thing which clearly proves the negro to be no better known to his panegyrist than his detractors, is the irreconcilable difference of their opinions. He is constantly with one, every thing he is not with the other. It is sufficient for one to refuse him a quality or a virtue, for the other to grant it to him. The planters who live with the negroes without giving themselves the trouble of considering them, are much better acquainted with them than he who defines them so boldly ; because they do not, like him, judge of the whole from a few exceptions. Be under no apprehensions that they will buy a *Mondongo* for a *Senegalese*, or an *Ibbo* for an *Arrada*.

The negro, just like ourselves, is good or bad, with all the different shades that modify the two extremes. His passions are those of uninformed nature : he is libidinous without love, and gluttonous without delicacy. Woman for him is merely

K

an

an instrument of pleasure. When he is hungry, it is a matter of indifference to him whether he eats a piece of carrion, or a pullet, a frog or a pintado \*. He is indolent because he has few of the wants which labour is calculated to satisfy ; and because he either cannot, or will not, conceive the necessity of labouring for us ; nor the justice of doing it without any other retribution than blows and stripes.

He loves repose, not for the sake of enjoying it as we do, nor for the opportunity of finding in tranquillity the moral fruition which a state of physical activity had deprived him of ; but for the sake of doing nothing—for to do nothing has ever been the ruling passion of all the people of the torrid zone §.

\* The savages of North America are not much more delicate in their tastes. “ I have seen them,” says Le Beau, “ collect the putrid dogs and cats which lay in the street. One day, in particular, I saw a Huron take up a hog which had died of disease, and already begun to infect the air with its stench, and carry it away on his shoulder. They swallow frogs whole ; dry the entrails of deer without cleaning, and find them as delicious as we do those of the woodcock.”

*Aventures du Sicur Le Beau. Tome 2. Chap. 29.*

§ And I might add, of slaves in every climate. The Russian peasantry, for example, commonly pass their festivals in their stoves, or lying before the doors of their houses : idleness being for them a kind of pleasure equal to the most rapturous enjoyment. See *Chappes d'Auteroche. Voyage en Sibérie. Tome 1. Page 316.*

He



He neither troubles himself with forming or breaking, without knowing why, those insignificant connections which have no other object or pledge of continuance, than the interest or convenience of the moment.

He neither loves nor hates habitually ; but when he does either the one or the other, it is with fury. Some of them have by turns, the grovelling and vain, the supple and inflexible, the ferocious and timid character of the despot and the slave. They brood over their vengeance, or suffer it to exhale in threats ; but would you see these hurlers of thunderbolts at your feet ?—shew them the point of a needle.

Generally speaking, the negroes are neither false nor perfidious : sometimes you will find a knave among them, who was probably in Africa a physician, a forcerer, or a priest—such a man is extremely dangerous.

To manage them properly, we should impose on them the simplest duties, the clearest laws ; and exact the performance of them with rigour, though with a strict regard to justice : for indulgence, in their eyes, is weakness ; and injustice a defect of judgment, which excites their hatred, or their contempt. I have made many trials, and the re-

sult has perfectly convinced me of the accuracy of this observation.

Whether it be that they have false or confused ideas on the nature of *meum* and *tuum*; that the absolute want of property makes them careless or ignorant of its rights; or that they suppose a state of slavery brings them back again to a state of nature, where all things are in common, I know not—but so it is, that the greatest part of the negroes are thieves.

Like all men whose religion is confined to a few superstitious practices, they have no idea of a conventional morality. Whatever good qualities a negro has, he derives from nature. The culpable negligence of the inhabitants in giving them some insight into the simple and fundamental principles of Christianity, allows them to live, grow old, and die in their native ignorance. When a sufficient number of them are collected, they are led to church, without knowing whither they are going; baptized, without comprehending what has been done to them, and behold, they are Christians\*!

The

\* This may appear suspicious in the mouth of a profane, like myself; it will therefore be more curious, and more satisfactory to hear the report of a celebrated missionary. “When I am told  
“of any slaves newly arrived in my district,” says Labat, “I



The only circumstance they can collect from the ceremony, is that they have changed their name: the negro *Maximbo* is told that he must be henceforth called *Eustace*; his organs accustomed to chaunt a soft and harmonious language, cannot accommodate themselves to the pronunciation of this barbarous word; he forgets it as fast as it is repeated, and distresses himself, poor wretch! at being no longer called by the name which his mother gave him. I have taken notice that the negroes, when together, never make use of their baptismal name: and, in spite of the kind of pride which they derive, as I have been told, from the honour of being Christians, it has frequently struck me, that those who affect to attach any value to it, do it more with a view to flatter their masters than from any other motive.

“ go to see them, and I begin by making them make the sign of  
 “ the cross, guiding their hand myself: after this, I make it myself upon their forehead, by way of taking possession of them  
 “ in the name of Jesus Christ and of his church. The negro who  
 “ comprehends nothing of what I say or do, stares at me with the  
 “ utmost astonishment.”

The missionary confesses afterwards, “ that the negroes understand no more what they are taught than a parrot—and that this  
 “ consideration would raise some scruples in his mind, if it were  
 “ not for the words of the Psalmist, *Homines et jumenta, salvabis Domine, Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast!!!* ”

You

You will easily conceive, Sir, that the negro troubles himself very little about the future. What advantage could he derive from it? Hence his foresight rarely extends beyond the present moment: it is only by dint of time and perseverance, that he can be brought to believe it is for his interest to cultivate his garden; and to preserve, for the night, the covering which he flings aside during the day.

What appears singular, and indeed contradictory is, that, sensible to pleasure, even to madness, he supports with a degree of calmness, bordering on insensibility, the most excruciating pains. The preparations for chastising him, seem to affect him more than the chastisement itself. The negro sings while he dances—while at work—while dying.\* *We* brave death, *he* laughs at it. When his

\* The Europeans, and still more the colonists, are taught to believe that this custom of singing in death is peculiar to the negroes: travellers, however, tell us the same of the natives of the two Americas. They do more: an Onontague aged an hundred, taken by a party of savages under the command of the Count de Frontenac, bore the torments they inflicted on him with a courage, a serenity of mind, worthy - - - of an Iroquois. A savage, tired out with his harangues, gave him several stabs with a knife. "I thank thee," said the Onontague, "but thou shouldst have permitted me to perish by fire. Frenchmen, learn of me to suffer: and you, Indians! remember how you ought to behave when you find yourselves in my situation!"

*Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale.* Tome 3. Lettre 7.



his companion expires, he does not say, *he is dead*: such a phrase would convey no meaning to his mind; but, *he is gone away, he is departed*. This manner of expressing himself, seems to indicate a persuasion that after death he returns into his own country; a prejudice which has determined more than one negro to destroy himself, that he might arrive there the sooner—What would this man be, if to his indifference for life, he joined the virtues which a contempt of death usually supposes!

After having passed a certain age, the negroes appear to pay no great attention to the ties of consanguinity. Some time since, it happened that a father, after a long separation, discovered his son in a work-shop under my own inspection. This unforeseen interview did not produce, on either side, the smallest surprize or emotion: the father and the son met like two travellers who recollect they have somewhere seen each other before.

We find among the negroes good and bad. Dispositions more or less favourable, render them more or less proper to receive a certain degree of polish and instruction. The example of the Creole negro, capable of acquiring every talent, every virtue, when he finds in his master a proper model to follow, proves that the inferiority of the Africans is, in many respects, the fault of their education. It

is

is then carrying the principle too far, to say with Aristotle, that slavery excludes every kind of virtue; and 'tis surely an abuse of the faculty of reasoning, to pretend to discover in the slight physical difference between the negro and the white, an obstacle that must for ever prevent the former from attaining the degree of intelligence and perfection, of which the latter is susceptible.

I promised you, Sir, nothing but a hasty and imperfect sketch; I have kept my word. You will find that my negro, delineated from the naked figure, and with the most scrupulous fidelity, differs in many points from the negro whom writers of celebrity have decorated with all the charms of their eloquence. These gentlemen, from the bottom of their stage have brought forward for the admiration of Europe, a negro\* whom they never saw but with the eyes of the imagination—a dramatic personage; while I shew you the negro of nature and of the colonies.

\* See the Romance in three volumes called "The Negro equalled by few Whites." The author had no need to say in his preface that he had never lived among the negroes, nor inhabited the colonies. His work, extremely interesting in other respects, abounds with errors and absurdities, which prove that he knows the negroes, as he does the regimen, the manners, and the customs of the colonists, merely by hearsay.

LET-



## LETTER XVI.

*Desert,  
September 1789.*

EVERY thing, Sir, has its inconveniences; even those which ought to be least subject to them. In this list, I place the indulgence with which you have read such of my letters as had arrived before yours were sent off; for it has emboldened me to communicate the continuation of my observations to you, with the same confidence, the same unreservedness, which constitutes, in fact, their only merit.

If they do not interest, they will at least serve to divert you, at a moment when France is become a kind of amphitheatre, in which twelve hundred legislators, seconded by twelve hundred thousand politicians, proclaim each, with a loud and audible voice, the principles on which he pretends the government, and the liberty of his country must from hence be founded.

Do you recollect the time when, from the extremity of Africa, I troubled you with a few ideas relative to these sublime speculations? what has been the result of this ungrateful and seducing employ?—

ploy?—that, of all the missions to which a reasonable being can possibly be destined, the most difficult, the most dangerous, and at the same time, the most useless, is that of giving reason to fools, in other words, wise laws to men.

I have therefore renounced, and I think for ever, the idea of diving into the mysteries of legislation; because every thing confirms me in the opinion, that it is with us, as with animals, who must never be indiscriminately subjected to an exclusive regimen: and I say again, with the sage of old, “ I  
“ had rather play with children, than govern men  
“ in a state of corruption.”

In my quality of gardener, however, I will just observe — take care that you do not carry away the earth with the roots of the plants you propose to extirpate: you will run the risk of being obliged to sow your new laws on the barren sand, or the arid gravel-stone: and as a traveller, I will add — ’tis not enough to have beautiful theories; it is necessary that long experience should have matured a great variety of observations, to enable you to be certain that you do not deceive yourselves in the application of principles, seducing in proportion as they are new, and dangerous in proportion as they are abstracted. Remember that the man the most celebrated for the extent of his acquirements,



ments, and the profundity of his metaphysics, that LOCKE, appointed to form a code of laws for Carolina, produced a plan of legislation as impracticable as it was ridiculous ! Above all things, be persuaded that you do the human race a most dangerous honour, when you suppose it sufficiently reasonable, or sufficiently wise, to be able to dispense with the necessity of being governed any longer like a fool, or an infant.

I have done —And now, Sir, for my farm. If you dislike the minutiae of a country life, treat them as I formerly used to do the pages of morality which I found in my romances ; skip them over, and pass to something more entertaining.

We have three cows here, which yield milk of an excellent quality, and in such abundance, that we can spare enough from our daily consumption to make a little butter and cheese.

But how can you make butter and cheese without churns and without moulds ? Just as Robinson Crusoe made cloaths without needles and without thread.

The process for making butter is simple enough : the cream is agitated in a glass jug, till the unctuous part is separated from the fluid ; it is then rinsed  
twice

twice or thrice in cold water ; by which time it has acquired consistence enough to be formed into a mass.

The making of cheese was rather more difficult, for want of a mould, either of earthen-ware, or of rushes. I supplied the place of it, as well as I could, by a canvas bag, whose top and bottom I kept open by the assistance of two hoops, supported by two cross sticks.

The nature of the ground, and the superabundance of pasturage, made me desirous of adding a few goats to my cows : and I was already pleasing myself with the idea of seeing them run in the woods, skip from precipice to precipice, get entangled in the long filaments of the *liane*, and extricate themselves by suspending the tufts of its brilliant flowers on their long horns ; but the consideration that nothing would prevent their roving through the coffee plantations, and committing the most terrible ravages, obliged me to abandon all thoughts of them. How many pleasures does this cruel interest annihilate !

I had brought with me a sufficient quantity of the seeds of vegetables and flowers to sow all the garden—but two operations were previously necessary ; to give the ground the regular form which  
every



every kitchen garden seems to demand, and to break and pulverize the soil, much too compact and rich for the kind of productions to which it was destined. As I had no tools with me but shovels and hoes, I was not long in perceiving that the most necessary were yet wanting ; in particular, that which is to the cultivation of a garden what the comb is to the toilet of a fine lady ; I mean a rake : and I succeeded, not without execrating an hundred times the detractors of Emilius' education, in fabricating a couple, which though not *chef d'oeuvres* of workmanship, were not for that the less useful.

Almost every thing succeeded beyond my hopes. Pulse, hitherto unknown in Saint Domingo, took root, and shot up surprisingly ; as did sorrel, parsley, wild thyme, and cresses. We had green peas almost all the year. Flowers, till then unseen in these regions of fire ; the narcissus, the hyacinth, the rezeda, nay the humble violet, embellished and perfumed the edges of my beds. Instead of the box, which borders with its gloomy verdure the flower-plats with you, we make use of the ippeacuana, whose stalks, of a most beautiful green, do not serve for an asylum to the destructive race of insects.

It

It is true that this rapid vegetation, which enables you to see, as it were, the progress of your plants, is not without its inconveniences: for, not allowing the seed time to ripen, it obliges you to be constantly sowing: it is equally true, that all my endeavours to save the flowers of the melon and the vine from the ravages of the ants have been ineffectual—I must observe, however, that this pest is merely local; for Saint Domingo produces during the greatest part of the year, very tolerable grapes, and delicious melons. I do not know whether it be true, but I have been told that vines must only be cultivated here in treillage; that if an inhabitant presumes to plant a few in his grounds, the Chamber of Commerce has a right to pull them up, and that the colonists are consequently reduced to drink wine, which the merchant may boldly pronounce of his *own growth*, since, if it escapes adulteration in the magazines of France, it is seldom but that the same quantity of common Anjou wine, which sets out from thence in two tuns, arrives here in three, under the justly celebrated name of Bourdeaux.\*

#### Artichokes

\* The rage of acquiring information in my voyages, which pushes me wherever any thing is in hand, enabled me to discover that the miracle of the multiplication of wine is not performed at sea precisely as it was at the marriage of Cana. It is commonly in the hold of the ship that the captain, seconded by a few trusty hands, proceeds to this operation. A brisk wind, or a storm, is  
generally



Artichokes grow here in great perfection, and to a larger size than in France; especially when care is taken to give them an elevated situation, with a northern aspect. Asparagus requires less pains, and is sooner fit for cutting here than elsewhere. I tried potatoes, but they proved unproductive, although I chose for them the light soil which they love—but I attribute this misfortune to their having been neglected.

The patate is more nutritive, replied the planters, when I proposed the cultivation of the potatoe. That is to say, Sir, the patate, especially the yellow one, being more stringy, and fatty, lies heavier on the stomach, and is more difficult of digestion. I believe, however, that the potatoe is infinitely more wholesome: if it be less nutritive, supply the quality by the quantity. The only advantage which the patate has over the potatoe, seems to be an agreeable perfume, which will always plead most powerfully in its favour.

The European grains which have succeeded best at Saint Domingo, are the mil, or millet, and the

generally chosen, when all the crew are supposed to be at their several posts: for the mysteries of Bacchus, like those of the Bona Dea, can only be celebrated at a distance from the eyes of the profane.

maize,

maize\*, which you are better acquainted with, perhaps, under the name of Turkey wheat. It is here of an extraordinary size and beauty, and is eaten in the ear, before it comes to maturity, roasted under the ashes: it is also eaten boiled in milk, or water; and in both cases is an excellent food.

The cattle are kept on the leaves and stalks of the patate, on green millet, Guinea grass, and the tops of the sugar cane, which should be placed in the first rank, for the peculiar quality they have of fattening such animals as are fed on them. The soft and pleasing verdure of the spots which are consecrated to the production of the two last articles, forms a most lovely contrast with the darker green of the woods, and, above all, of the coffee plantations.

What think you of all this, Sir? 'Do you not fancy you have been reading a chapter of the "*Maison Rustique*?"' I have formerly heard Rousseau reproached for his *bad taste*, in entering into the details of the rural and domestic œconomy of the

\* This must have been one of the first grains which the Europeans introduced into the Antilles; for in 1522, Cortez said that "maize made on the continent of America, much better bread than in the islands." *Correspondence de Fernand Cortez avec L'Empereur Charles V. Lettre 2.*



house of Clarens. What would these critics say of my letter? And yet, how could you become acquainted with Saint Domingo, if, like so many others, I had confined myself to the mere objects of polity and commerce; and, adding to the prodigious number of false ideas already formed of this colony, given you exceptions for general rules, and the plan of the habitation of some great sugar planter for the model of all the rest?—Would to Heaven, the abode of all those wealthy wretches resembled the Desert! they would not then be incessantly agitated between the ambition of appearing what they are not, and the difficulty of maintaining the absurd state they affect to display, with inadequate resources!

People imagine in Europe that the colony is only inhabited by men overflowing with riches; wholly occupied with the care of employing their immense wealth in diversifying and multiplying their pleasures. Believe me, Sir, there is no country where the fortunes of individuals are less solid, and where the anxiety of securing them from the vicissitudes of chance, so effectually trouble the enjoyments they might otherwise produce. In no part of the world are *riches* and *happiness* less synonymous than at Saint Domingo.

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LET-

## LETTER XVII.

Desert,  
September 1789.

A PREJUDICE not uncommon in Europe, amongst your half-informed writers is, that rice can only be cultivated with success in grounds capable of being overflowed \*. If you tell a Frenchman that this grain grows here on the highest mountains, he will laugh in your face, because his little reading has not informed him that it grows in the same manner in Louisiana. †

The pomgranate and the fig-tree were naturalized here without difficulty; as were the AlberGINE and the Taumate of the southern countries. But all these little articles of innocent luxury are neglected by nine tenths of the inhabitants in a most inconceivable manner. It is but seldom that even the orange tree receives the degree of attention necessary to prevent it from degenerating: and yet

\* See on this subject the *Voyage aux Indes Occidentales*, par Grose, Chap. 5. also the *Journal du Voyage de Siam*, Page 230 and 273.

† *Histoire de la Louisiane*. Tome 1. Chap. 13.

nothing



nothing would be more easy than to procure feeds from Malta, or plants from Portugal; to propagate these two species here to the exclusion of all the others, and to have at the Antilles the golden apple of the Hesperides.

This long, but imperfect enumeration of the plants new to the soil of Saint Domingo, will probably induce you to ask a very obvious question—what did this island produce then before the arrival of the Europeans? Nothing, Sir, or next to nothing. I strive to discover what could have been the principal food of the natives, and I can only find in the animal kingdom, caymans, or alligators, by no means plentiful; tourlouroux, or land crabs, lizards, and a few birds—for even the rats, so numerous here at present\*, were introduced from Europe.

The vegetable kingdom offered no resources but a few herbs, roots, and berries, (with the exception of the ananas, and the sapatilla, whose sweetness, extremely cloying, surpasses any thing known in Europe, but which I do not believe, any more than

\* They have not only peopled the Antilles, but even Peru. and doubtless the rest of the new world. The Indians call them, in their language, *Oaocha*, that is to say, *Come from the sea*.

See *L' Histoire de la decouverte et de la conquête du Percu, par Augustin de Zarate. Tome 1. Livre 3.*

the former, to be indigenous here) a species of citron, very small but very good, the wild orange, the ignama, and perhaps the choux-caraïbe. Add to these scanty means, the fishery on the coast, and in the rivers, by no means productive, and you will still enquire, how the inhabitants of a country, which has been represented to us as extremely populous, could be supported? If we may believe the inflated accounts of the Spaniards, no spot on the globe was more so than Saint Domingo on its first discovery; since Columbus, when he marched against Manicata, one of the caciques of the island, found him in the plain of Viga-Real at the head of an hundred thousand fighting men! More moderate calculations, however, make the population of the whole island amount to no more than twelve or thirteen hundred thousand souls; so that if you add to this number forty or fifty thousand who were brought hither from the Bahama islands, and those who might be born here, from the date of its discovery to that of its complete depopulation, you will find that the conquerors of the new world only extirminated in the single island of Saint Domingo, about ~~two~~ millions of human beings, of whom the greater part perished in the mines, where, according to the evidence of the traveller Bossu\*, they contracted the too famous malady which has

\* *Nouveau Voyage aux Indes Occidentales.* Tome 1. Lettre 1.



made, and still makes such ravages amongst us, under the name of the French disease, &c. We read, and that in a Spanish author, that in the island of Cuba, fifty families hung themselves in one day, in a single village, to escape the tyranny of his barbarous countrymen. †

You will probably ask me, Sir, who was the speculative genius who took upon himself the care of introducing among us these rats, which commit such devastation, that a large field of millet or maize is sometimes devoured by them in the course of a night; especially if it be on the edge of the woods, where these animals are so numerous, that they have traced out paths as well worn as those which lead across our fields? A short residence at a sea port would have enabled you to solve the problem.

The builders have scarce fixed the ribs of a ship to the keel, and laid on a part of the sheathing, ere the rats establish themselves in it: the vessel is launched: the rats still keep possession — But how, you will say, do they live, before it is victualled? They swim ashore at night, eat for the next four and twenty hours, and return on board. As many as can, get into the corn magazines, where they

† *Histoire de la Conquête de la Floride.* Livre 1. Chap. 10.

bristle up their hair, roll themselves amongst the grain, and return with all they can accumulate ! But how do they get on board with their freight, when the ship is no longer in the dock ? They creep along the cables, through the hawses, or into the port-holes, from whence they betake themselves to the hold, the bread room, the space between the sheathing and the sides, &c. where, without anxiety for the future, or embarrassment about the claws of their enemy, they live and breed with so much rapidity, as to become the pest of the seamen, and the terror of the cats !

There is something very astonishing in an instinct supported by such a number of intelligent combinations : but the manner in which they provide themselves with the choicest provisions of the store-room, is still more so. I shall conclude my letter with a fact which I have taken from one of our old voyagers.

“ We had observed for some time, that a certain  
 “ number of eggs were daily missing from a small  
 “ barrel in which they were packed, and which  
 “ was secured under lock and key. Six of us,  
 “ amongst whom was the captain, bored each a  
 “ gimlet hole in the wainscot—and this is what  
 “ we saw :

“ Three



“ Three large rats approached the barrel, which  
 “ was about half-full. One of them went into it,  
 “ another fixed himself on the edge, and the third  
 “ staid below, on the ground. We could not see  
 “ what was doing in the barrel, but presently the  
 “ rat on the edge appeared to be drawing up some-  
 “ thing from the inside into which he had stooped ;  
 “ while he who had staid below got upon the hoops,  
 “ and, standing, on his hind legs, reached forward,  
 “ and received into his mouth what he who stood  
 “ upon the edge had drawn up. The latter, letting  
 “ go his hold, stooped again into the barrel, and  
 “ drew up something which was in like manner  
 “ taken hold of by him on the hoops ; we now dis-  
 “ covered that it was the tail of a rat ; and at the  
 “ third tug, the thief appeared with an egg clasped  
 “ between his legs, his back resting against the  
 “ inside of the barrel, and his head downwards.  
 “ His two companions then placed him in equili-  
 “ brium upon the edge of the barrel ; he who was  
 “ below took him again by the tail ; and he who  
 “ was above, by one of his ears, and in this man-  
 “ ner, supporting and conducting him by the two  
 “ extremities, they lowered him gently down from  
 “ hoop to hoop, till they placed him on the ground,  
 “ still on his back, and holding the egg between  
 “ his legs. In this manner they dragged him to-  
 “ wards a hole between the wainscot, and the  
 “ sheathing

“ sheathing of the ship, where we lost sight of  
 “ them.” \*

What would have interested me, Sir, as much as the sight of the capture, would be the manner in which the egg was divided †. We may be partly certain, however, that it produced no disputes nor animosities amongst adventurers equal in right and in power.

To conclude. It is difficult to conceive the rapid increase of these animals in a long voyage. I recollect that on my return from the Cape of Good Hope, the cats ventured no longer to appear between decks; and that though we destroyed numbers of them by traps, &c. they bred so fast that they seemed to increase upon our hands. When this is the case, there is no other way to clear the ship of them, but by completely unloading it on your arrival at a port, stopping all the scuttle holes but one, and making a fire with wet straw in the bottom of the hold: the smoke will compel them to quit their retreat, and drive them, half suffocated,

\* *Journal d'un Voyage aux Indes Orientales.* Tome 2.

† Our ingenious author might not have been so much interested in the division of the plunder as he imagined; since the recorder of this most extraordinary anecdote (a man of strict honour and veracity) tells us, that he saw the rats return a second and a third time to the barrel, so that there was an egg a-piece. T.



to the vent which is left open for them, where they may be destroyed, or driven with ease into the sea.

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LETTER XVIII.

*Desert,  
November 1789.*

YOU will have a very inadequate idea, Sir, of the life I lead here, if you think that my labours are confined to superintending the poultry-yard, and the pigeon-house; to cultivating the garden, and overlooking the kitchen, and the workshop. I have extended my department over all that can contribute to the embellishing or enlivening our solitude.

My first enterprize was to widen, for a space of four or five hundred yards, the road which leads to the house, that we might have a place to walk in with comfort. This labour, which I executed alone, and with an activity that formed a singular contrast to my exterior appearance, gave me no small trouble, inasmuch as I was obliged to cut through the living rock, and displace large blocks of stone, with no other implements than a wretched hoe, and a lever, whose powers I learnt to calculate by experience.

When

When, after long and reiterated efforts I had succeeded in suspending one of those masses on the edge of the ravine, I generally called Madame de L \* \* \* to see it precipitated down the steep. With a single exertion of my foot I put it in motion ; and I said to her, See how that grandee in disgrace involves in his fall the feeble plants which cling to him ! —We have seen the same thing happen elsewhere.

Two fountains, one at the bottom of the semicircle in which the buildings are inclosed, and the other on the left, without the gate that leads to them, give birth to two rivulets, of which the former, after a few meanders, spreads into a little marsh ; crosses the road at right angles, which it undermines, and throws itself into the ravine : the latter, immediately after quitting its source, forms a second marsh by filtering through the same road ; and finally disappears.

My first care was to carry a ditch, of a capacity proportioned to the volume of the first rivulet, quite across the marsh, which by this simple operation was changed into a charming meadow : this I embellished still more by rooting up the coarse and unsightly weeds that deformed it, and substituting in their stead the young shoots of the ananas, whose spreading stalk, surmounted by a beautiful  
apple



apple of gold, tufted with green, is a real decoration.

I had conceived an ambitious project, for the execution of which it was previously necessary to unite the two streams. Even then my plan was full of difficulties; but they were not insurmountable—the dread of failing, and the hope of surprizing Madame de L \* \* \*, induced me to keep it a secret.

Although the elevation of the springs facilitated the flowing away of the waters, yet the chapped and porous soil presented obstacles almost impossible to overcome. By dint of industry and perseverance, however, I overcame them; nay, I was indebted to them for embellishments, on which I had not reckoned, since they gave me an opportunity of forming some cascades—and if my ignorance of the most simple principles of hydraulics occasioned me to commit many blunders, each had its use, since it taught me to avoid others. It is thus that art is perfected!

In little more than a week, the two streams, united and carried across the road, in a well-compacted and regular channel, formed of flat stones, suspended as it were, along the borders of the ravine, formed, under a canopy of verdure, cut out of the thick tuft of bamboos, a fall, which joined  
to

to the murmur of my little cascades, broke at length, and for ever, the long silence of our solitude, and struck with joy and wonder both the echoes which repeated the sound, and Madame de L \* \* \*, whom I had secretly laboured to surprize, or rather to captivate and delight.

It is here that we pass a great part of the day, she in sewing, I in reading; and her little girl in paddling in the stream with nothing on but her chemise, in the bosom of nature, of innocence, and of friendship. This peaceful mode of life, Sir, where every hour has its occupation, is not without its charms; however insipid it may appear to you, after that which I have led elsewhere. Undoubtedly there is a wide difference between the bamboo arch under which I now repose, and the gilded ceiling, and magnificent dome I lately occupied in the palace of kings; to say nothing of the brilliant pictures with which imagination then enlivened my career—All, all is shipwrecked! but in losing even hope, I preserved one quality which can never be taken from me: the art of enjoying what remains.

While I wait till a long series of labours, (which can only be executed by insensible degrees), shall enable me to add to what is already done, the little embellishments of which the ground is still susceptible, I have planted at the extremity of the garden



two rows of avocaters, which will one day form a shady alley from the house to the road. The side of the hill, where the negroes have fixed their huts, and which rises from the meadow I mentioned above, has nothing at present to boast of, but a few languishing coffee plants, with here and there a straggling tree. I intend to cover it with shrubs and bushes, such as the green and red pimento, the pomgranate, the citron, and the sweet smelling acacia. The dark green of the fir shall be contrasted with the red and white of the *franchipanier*; and by the side of the charming *papayer*, whose trunk, more elegant than that of the palm, its majestic rival, gains in grace what it loses in grandeur, shall bloom the queen of flowers, the flower of every climate, the rose! Instead of the steep and stony road by which the negroes descend to the house, a broad and easy path shall wind through the coppice, where the lianes, directed with skill, shall suspend their coloured tufts from the branches of the orange tree, the sampale, the acajou, the calabasier, &c. If the rich European consumes a part of his fortune that he may see the tulip tree and the magnalia of America degenerate in his garden, why should not I gratify a sentiment more active and more pleasing than curiosity, by naturalizing a few of the trees of my native country? Do you think, Sir, that

\* See the conclusion of the second Canto of "*Les Jardins*," by M. de Lille.

my feelings would be less tenderly touched at finding in Saint Domingo the aspin or the birch of our woods, than the young Potavira's, when he discovered in France the trees of Otaheite !

If the experience of his predecessors (of whom scarce one in a thousand realizes a fortune sufficient to enable him to return old and infirm, to die in his native country) had not been thrown away on the first who fixed his residence here ; if the absurdity of sacrificing present pleasures to the ambition of procuring, some time hence, uncertain and factitious ones, had not left the good man too little sense to discover that the urgency of making a fortune does not necessarily exclude the power of being happy in the interim ; instead of burying his casa in the hole where it now stands, he would have built it on a platform, a little to the right of the plantation.

At this spot our walks usually terminate, since I have made the road practicable. There, an horizon equally extended on every side, but broken by abrupt projections of the rocks, or the tops of the mountains, presents us on the left the intire bay of Jaquemel, the gloomy defiles of the vale of Goffeline, some of its buildings, a torrent, and the mountain of La Selle ; on the right, one of the best cultivated districts of the island, *mornes* less wild and



and savage, extensive valleys, streamlets which meander through them, settlements more rich and populous, and, to sum up all, the sea of Léogane, and the island of Gonave.

Behold, then, the limits of our walks, the theme of our regrets, and the object of our schemes to come! It is there that we frequently linger till the return of night compels us to retire slowly to our sepulchre.—See, said I, yesterday, at the approach of evening, to Madame de L \* \* \*, how many men complain of their existence, for want of knowing how to extend and embellish it! Behold the most beautiful of hours! that in which the tears of the wretched cease to flow with their sweat; in which the skies less inflamed, permit us to breathe a fresher and a purer air! Why is my ear only struck with the shrill and discordant cry of that flight of parroquets, or with the croaking of the filthy reptiles, who vegetate in the bottom of the ravine? Why does not the bell of the Angelus \* announce to every habitation that the night brings repose? Why do not the barkings of the faithful dog assure me that I may sleep in peace, relying on his fidelity? Why, instead of the dull and monotonous *tom-tom*, which that negro produces by

\* The signal for Vespers amongst the Catholics—of which the first prayer begins with the word Angelus. T.

striking

striking on a body without elasticity, do I not hear the sound of the *galoubet*, or rustic flute, unite itself to the sweet and well-timed voices of the negresses, and direct the light steps of that troop of slaves, who forget, in dancing, both the labours of the present day, and those which await them on the next?

“ All this is folly,” say those sagacious people who have their entrails in their pockets, and their long ears still nearer their wits than their head!  
 “ We came to Saint Domingo to acquire a fortune,  
 “ and not to see negroes dance, nor to listen to  
 “ cascades; prudence bids us live, not for the pre-  
 “ sent, but for the future.”

Be it so: keep then, ye provident œconomists of the future, keep the few flowers with which ye might have strewed your way, to scatter over your bier— But when a reverse, too frequent here, shall have compelled both you and me, to seek for consolation in something better than the promises of fortune, do not strive to embitter by late and superfluous regrets, the enjoyments which I have secured to myself in defiance of her caprice.

And let no one, Sir, advance the sophism so often brought forward by those who do not believe what they say, that our happiness is the same,  
 whether



whether we enjoy it in the past, the present, or the future ; for I shall reply that, since one of these modes does not necessarily exclude another, there is nothing to prevent my connecting the enjoyment of the present with the recollection of the past, or the hope of the future.—“ What a curse, what a “ dreadful curse is our wealth,” cries a modern traveller, “ when it renders us incapable of happiness” \*. It is, and ever must be with cupidity, “ never rich in what it possesses, always poor in what “ it desires;” and which takes the name of forecast; as it is with avarice, which assumes the disguise of œconomy ; and whose whole merit consists in the art of living poor to die rich.

Whether we shall be seized with this mania in our turn, I know not ; but, in the interim, we have augmented our stock with four couple of grey and white pintados, and with a male and female Hoco. The former of those birds you are already acquainted with ; you know the delicacy of their flesh, and how much their vivacity, their clear and musical cry, their numerous broodings, &c.

\* “ *Lettres sur quelques parties de la Suisse,*” *seconde partie,* Lettre 11.

§ “ *L'Ami des Hommes,*” Tome 1. Chap. 1.

enliven and animate the poultry-yard, whenever they are thoroughly tamed. †

The Hoco, Oco, or Oeco ‡, transported hither from Cayenne, and originally from Mexico, with a plumage of glossy black, except the breast, which is white, and a crest of the most beautiful yellow, is stronger and larger than the peacock—perfectly familiar, but so great a coward, that a chicken of two days old puts it to flight; and so grossly stupid, that a turkey, independant even of his self-conceit, may fancy himself an eagle by his side. Nothing announces that the silly couple have yet thought of perpetuating themselves—There is no great evil in a temporary check to the propagation of fools!

I have read over my letter, Sir, and find it to be a mere rhapsody, somewhat of the longest. Not to derogate from its character, I will take the opportunity of a slight fit of illness, with which I was seized, and which I easily removed by following the regimen of the country, to say a few words of its diseases and its remedies. I must previously

† See a very minute and accurate description of the different species of the pintado in the "*Recueil d'Observations curieuses*," &c. Tome 1. Chap. 10.

‡ This bird is extremely well described in the "*Journal du Voyage fait à la Mer du Sud,*" avec les Flibustiers. par Ravenau de Luffan. Page 41.

observe



observe that they are possessed here with an idea that people of a weak and delicate constitution resist the influence of the climate more successfully than those who are stronger. The fact is obviously not so ; but the opinion is easily accounted for, since the former, incessantly reminded of their danger, by their weakness, take every precaution ; while the latter, full of a blind confidence in their strength, inconsiderately abuse it. It is with this as with fortune : 'tis not œconomical mediocrity, but prodigal opulence that ruins itself.

Undoubtedly, bilious and sanguine temperaments are more subject here than elsewhere to the maladies produced by the fermentation of the humours, or the exhaustion of the fluids, which produces an impoverishment of the blood : but nature has placed the remedy by the side of the disease. In very hot countries people eat little : the abundance of acids allows of an habitual but moderate use of them ; they purify and cool the blood ; divide and facilitate the evacuation of the humours—and if those of a sanguine habit are more subject than others to inflammatory complaints, they are, in their turn, less speedily exhausted by a transpiration, that may be said to be perpetual. Such of the colonists as have good sense enough to submit to the mode of living the climate prescribes, attain to a good old age, especially when they in-

habit the higher grounds, where the air is more pure, the heat less intense, and where, when once seasoned, they are intirely exempt from the maladies so prevalent in the plains.

If I may trust my own experience, all food of too solid a nature should be avoided, as well as too free a use of strong liquors. It is, doubtless, necessary to give back to the blood the humidity it has lost by perspiration; but without having recourse to the balance of Cornaro, a very slight acquaintance with your constitution will enable you to form a tolerable judgment of what it requires. At my first arrival here, a planter, with whom I was in habits of intimacy, persuaded me that the use of water was preferable to that of wine. I was piously following his plan, when I perceived that the new Doctor Sangrado derogated prodigiously from his own principles, as often as he dined abroad: from this I concluded, that his late prohibition of wine must be merely understood of such as might have been drank at his own table; and I resumed my usual regimen.

The action of the moral on the physical—necessarily more powerful in a climate where the senses are so easily exasperated by a most rapid circulation—shews the propriety of avoiding with the utmost attention, every thing that, by irritating,  
might



might give the organs a superabundance of force and activity, which would quickly destroy their energy.

It is in the neglect of this salutary principle that we must look for the cause of that speedy, and premature exhaustion, which so soon destroys, or reduces to a degree of weakness and imbecility, a-kin to death, so many of the inhabitants of Saint Domingo.

I believe that cold, or at most, lukewarm baths, a light and wholesome diet, gentle evacuations from time to time, a moderate degree of activity, and labour rather calculated to amuse than to occupy, are all that is necessary to preserve a little health, when one has reached a certain age. Every colonist is commonly provided with a small chest of medicines, of which the principal are manna, salts, and rhubarb: the country itself produces tamarinds, and the leaves of the cassia tree; a slight infusion of which, with a little orange juice, makes as good a purge as a mixture more scientifically composed. Some species of the liane may be used for the same purpose; but you must be vigilantly on your guard against others which are a strong and subtle poison. The negroes are but too well acquainted with such as have this fatal property: their unhappy  
experience

experience in these matters has produced more than one Locusta, in a country where the public state of morals does not necessarily leave any influence to the empire of religion.

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LETTER XIX.

*Desert,  
December 1789.*

I AM wholly of your opinion, Sir—The management of the ground is every where a most important object. I shall therefore venture to lay before you such information as I have received on that of Saint Domingo.

Although the cultivation of sugar be the first in consequence, I shall say nothing of it at present, because I have not had an opportunity of following it through all its details. I have only put a single question to the planters; and this they have not answered to my satisfaction. It was — why, working on a level, obliged to furrow the ground, and to maintain a great number of men, horses, or mules, to carry canes, transport the liquor when made, &c. they did not, instead of the hoe, make use of the plough,  
an



an instrument infinitely more simple and more expeditious : especially as it would not only lessen the number of negroes required by the present mode of cultivation, but produce the double saving of a considerable capital, and of a moveable property extremely expensive, and often ruinous from the vicissitudes to which it is subject ; since, unlike every thing to be seen elsewhere, the fortune of a planter is founded here, much more on those moveables than on the produce they are calculated to raise.

I know more than one inhabitant whom the idea of an innovation, by so much the more *barbarous*, as it tends to substitute beasts to men, will drive to despair : but if I had the honour to be a sugar planter, I believe, (that deaf to the remonstrances of the generous proxeneta, who in return for the negroes my labour destroys, undertakes the care of peopling my seraglio with African beauties,) nothing should prevent me from making all the trials I might judge necessary to remove my doubts on the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the two methods.

Chance, routine, and a very limited degree of knowledge, have long presided over the cultivation of coffee, introduced here for the first time in 1715, the epoch of the destruction of the cocoa walks.

It

It is but lately that, instead of the old custom of sticking the young plants in the ground at random, they have adopted the more eligible plan of giving their nurseries a regular form ; that of a quincunx—certainly a most advantageous one, as it admits of a free circulation of air, leaves a sufficient space for the plants to spread without injuring each other, facilitates hoeing, and, finally, abridges the labour of gathering the berries. They have a custom of topping the plants at the height of four or five feet from the ground, that, by concentrating the sap in the lower parts of the stems, they may obtain a greater quantity of fruit : I suspect the duration of the plant is abridged by the operation ; but on this point I do not speak with much confidence—that I could only be enabled to do by a long series of experiments \*. I shall only add, that, notwithstanding

\* Those who wish for more information on the subject of coffee have only to read, if they have patience,

1. The Treatise of Prosper Alpinus, published in 1592.
2. Another Treatise of the same author, on the Medicine of the Egyptians.
3. The Observations and the Notes of Vestigius, in 1638.
4. A third Treatise of Faustus Nairon, in 1671.
5. A fourth Treatise of Philip Silvester Dufour, in 1684.
- 6 A fifth Treatise, by Nicholas de Blégnny, in 1687.
7. A Letter on the Origin and Progress of Coffee, by Antoine Galland, in 1699.

And lastly, An Historical Treatise on the Origin and Progress of Coffee, printed at the end of a voyage into Arabia Felix, and published in 1715.

It



standing the imperfect system at present in use, the annual average produce of the coffee plantations of Saint Domingo is estimated at the amazing sum of eighty millions!

The most seducing article of cultivation for such as are less eager to accumulate, than to enjoy wealth, is cotton. It is not so lucrative, indeed, as the rest, but its returns are quick, and it requires fewer hands, fewer buildings, &c. Almost every soil agrees with it, though there are some, such as that of Gonaïve for example, which raise plants of a superior quality. It has to dread 1° certain winds which blight its flowers. 2° A fly, which preys upon them. 3° The competition of the Levant and India cotton. Finally, the greater or less degree of vogue, which slackens, suspends, and sometimes entirely arrests the manufacturing of it into stuffs, and discourages the planter, always in doubt about the sale of a commodity which has more than once been known to fail. \*

It was Monsieur D'Éfeliex, as is well known, Governor General of the French West Indies, who imported into them the first coffee plant—and who, in a scarcity of water, had the resolution to sacrifice the half of his allowance to the preservation of his precious charge. Pietro della Vela, a Spaniard, contends most strenuously, that the *Nepenthe* of Homer was nothing but coffee!—It is to be hoped the Gods did not drink it without sugar.

\* See the description of the cotton-tree in *L'Histoire d'un Voyage aux Isles Malouines*. Tome 1. Chap. 5.

I have

I have little or no information to give you respecting indigo. I do not know a single planter who cultivates it, and I have seen several estates where it has been long given up—you will find the reason in a former letter.

The height, the extensive shade, and the beauty of the fruit of the cacaoyer, or cocoa-tree, make the people of taste regret that this article of commerce has also been renounced. With respect to cassia, rocou, tobacco, ginger, and Brazil-wood, which formed, within these hundred years, the principal, and almost the sole resources of Saint Domingo, they are hardly known here by name, since the introduction of cotton, sugar, and coffee.

An Academy of Agriculture has been established at Cape François, to which the planters are indebted for some observations, which have improved the art of cultivation—but, reduced merely to give advice, and to propose experiments, which no one is tempted to make at his own risque, it will never attain the end of its institution until government shall take the expence upon itself.

Notwithstanding the progress which cultivation has made here within the last twenty years, I have taken notice of a very great error—that of employing the hoe in weeding, instead of the hand : for  
thus



thus it happens that the roots which are left in the ground, incessantly produce new shoots, while, if they were pulled up, care being taken to do it before the plants had feeded, we might hope by degrees to exterminate them intirely. It is in general a wretched mode of calculation, always to prefer the most expeditious method; since we can never consider a work as finished, which we have constantly to begin a-new.

Perhaps, Sir, it would be proper to set aside, under the name of *King's Farm*, or *Estate*, a piece of land sufficiently spacious, and varied, to admit of every species of cultivation. There, experience entrusted with the care of verifying the new methods, might rectify their defects, establish their excellencies, and attempt new improvements.

They are now making some experiments of this nature in the King's Garden, at Port-au-Prince, but it is neither in a garden, nor on a few detached plants, that they can be so effectually made as to demonstrate the eligibility of adopting this or that particular system. A careful and intelligent man may lavish such pains on a new plant as to make it thrive prodigiously in a well prepared soil, without being authorized from thence to conclude that its culture would be equally successful upon a larger scale. To say the truth, this reflection does not seem

seem to have escaped the managers ; since they have lately distributed a number of clove-trees among the planters. Several have died ; others have succeeded : so that the general question respecting the possibility of naturalizing this valuable article must remain doubtful till more extensive trials enable us to decide it.

The managers of the King's Garden talk also of introducing into the Antilles, the rima, or bread-fruit tree of the Society Isles\* : but will it find there the soil of its native country ? Will it be able to resist the hurricanes, and above all, the Chamber of Commerce,—still more destructive ?

The knowledge you previously had of this country, joined to what you have been able to add to it from my correspondence, must have taught you that there is very little industry here. It has been banished by a variety of causes, of which the four following are the chief.

1° The little taste of the inhabitants for such productions of the arts as depend on this secondary quality.

\* See the description of the rima in the *Nouveau Voyage à la Mer du Sud*, Page 187.

2° The



2° The scarcity of hands, which makes every article of workmanship extremely dear.

3° The earnestness with which the Chamber of Commerce decries, shackles, nay, even persecutes every thing which tends to weaken its influence, by rendering it less necessary.

4° The apathy which under a burning sky permits men to remain ignorant of a multitude of wants, whose gratification, in becoming a source of enjoyment to the rich, opens a vast field to the industry of the poor.

Every article of furniture, whether of necessity, of comfort, or of luxury, is imported ready made from France, into a country which offers, in great abundance, to the carpenter, the turner, and the cabinet-maker, the different species of the acajou, or mahogany, the manciniller, &c. The Chamber purchases these woods at a low rate, works them up in the cheapest manner, and sells the inhabitants for six livres, the same quantity of plank she lately bought of them for six sous.—You will allow, Sir, that this is carrying the rate of brokerage a little too high !

And what is the consequence ? That among the inhabitants who make what is very improperly called

called here *a clear wood*, that is, who cut down the trees in a certain extent of country, in order to cultivate the soil, there is scarcely a man who thinks it worth his while to select the valuable part, before he commits the fall to the flames; which thus devour inconceivable treasures.

Saint Domingo abounds in a very beautiful species of fern. It is not then impossible but that glass might be made here of a superior quality to that of Europe. The earth offers of itself to the potter a new substance for his ingenuity, and when it is considered how vast a consumption of these two articles of the first necessity, the awkwardness of the negroes occasions, it is greatly to be lamented that no attempts have been made on the spot to procure them at a price less ruinous.

Hitherto they have only thought of employing the *pitre* to make halters for horses and asses. Its thread, which is of a dazzling white, stronger than hemp, and less brittle than hair, would supply with advantage the place of those two substances, in a variety of articles where they are at present solely employed.

They manufacture, but in no great quantity, from the *Latanier*, or fan-tree Palm, a sort of hat, which is lighter than ours, and less retentive of the rays of  
the



the sun : it is also less liable to be spoiled by alternately imbibing the moisture and the dust. It would not be amiss, then, to encourage the use of them ; since they are not only better adapted to the climate, but cheaper, and more durable than those of felt.

The Palma-Christi, which the botanists call the *Ricinus Americanus*, the Caraihs *Carapat*, and the natives of Peru *Pillerilla*, is a shrub, whose leaf, applied to the breasts of nurses, is said to increase the quantity of milk. I cannot vouch for the certainty of this quality in the Palma-Christi, but I know that its fruit, or its seed, produces an oil extremely sweet, which, independent of the other uses to which it may be applied, is administered with the best effects to children afflicted with cholics or subject to consumptions. \*

The female mulattoes compose, with a few fruits, such as the citron, the ananas, &c. a coarse kind of sweet-meat : the dearnefs of refined sugar,

\* The oil is extracted in the following manner. " The fruit  
" is first scalded, then exposed to the sun for two or three days.  
" It is next pounded until it is reduced to a paste, which is diluted with water, equal in quantity to the mass of pounded  
" fruit ; the whole is then boiled, and the oil which floats on the  
" top taken off with a spoon. The sediment is again washed,  
" and a small quantity of oil procured by repeating the process."

*Recueil d' Observations Curieuses.* Tome 1. Chap. 21.

which

which obliges them to have recourse to syrup, or molasses, prevents them from giving it that degree of excellence which, like the liqueurs of Martinico, would procure it a vast reputation, and a rapid sale.

One profession and two trades, generally make at Saint Domingo, the fortunes of such as exercise them; when they do not suffer themselves to be seduced by the ambition of becoming planters. The profession is the terrible one of physic, and the trades are those of the mason, and above all of the carpenter.

You will easily imagine, Sir, that neither the one nor the other can be gifted with any very extraordinary degree of intelligence and skill. An ignorant disciple of Saint Como, a half-taught surgeon's mate, must needs be a wretched physician in a country where the art of healing requires a study perfectly new, and an extensive botanical knowledge in addition to a long and regular practice in Europe.

So little is required of the mason here, that the talents of a common labourer are amply sufficient. Monf. Cottin brought with him one of this description, whose whole knowledge of the business was confined to the art of making mortar. He is at present



present owner of two negroes, and gives himself airs—just like the rest.

The construction of casars and mills exacts something more of the carpenter. Since we have opened a commerce with the United States of America, we have imported from thence frames of houses, which are formed with more care, and furnished much cheaper than those made on the spot : but as the wood employed on them is very far from being as good as that we use here, I should imagine this consideration would insure a preference to the French workman, as soon as the competition shall have compelled him to lower his price, to finish his materials with greater care, and to exhibit more taste, and intelligence in putting them together.

I have abridged, as much as possible, those insipid details which I should never have thought of but for your questions. Undoubtedly, there is no climate which necessarily excludes a certain degree of industry : but placed here between agriculture and commerce, of which it is alternately the produce and the bond, it requires, to enable it to spread and thrive, a portion of encouragement and liberty, without which it must inevitably fall into languor and decay. Industry is the sole patrimony of the poor ; when it is too much circumscribed,

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it

it is either intirely destroyed, or reduced to supply by illegal means, the want of those legitimate resources of which it has been deprived.

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LETTER XX.

*Desert,  
January 1790.*

I MUST give you an account, Sir, of two little excursions I have just made. One to visit a planter ; the other to hunt the maroon : for the instant you leave this domestic animal at liberty it escapes into the woods, where it resumes the form, the manners, and the character of the wild boar.

Monfieur Baudouin, the overseer, and myself, set out before day-break, to dine at the bottom of the Goffeline, about three leagues off, with his father, an inhabitant of that quarter.

After quitting, at the foot of the *morne*, the track which leads from Jaquemel to the Desert, we were obliged to put our shoes and stockings in our pockets, and to walk barefoot near three miles, up the



the bed of a river, being the smoothest and most convenient road; although the sand which was here and there above water, was sometimes so scorching as to force us to pass over it as if we were treading on burning coals.

The silent and gloomy defiles which we traversed, presented several new species of trees, shrubs, plants, and flowers. Amongst the first, that which struck me the most was the *mapou*, beyond contradiction the largest of all trees, if, as I believe, and as Ravenau de Luffan writes, his companions really made out of a single one, a canoe which carried fourscore men. \*

Whatever may be the resistance which such an enormous mass opposes to the action of the wind, I saw one torn up by the roots in the last hurricane. We should deceive ourselves, however, if we always judged of the violence of the winds by the size of the trees they overthrow. In no part of Saint Domingo have I found the soil which covers the under stratum of sand, shell, or lime-stone, more than two or three feet thick; so that the roots of the largest trees, instead of shooting downwards are obliged to strike out horizontally, in such a manner that a considerable part of them always

\* *Journal du Voyage fait à la Mer du Sud, &c. Page 95.*

appears above ground. But a more striking distinction between the trees of this country, and those of the old world is, that the strait and smooth trunks of the former only begin to push out their branches towards the top, or at most at two-thirds of their height ; so that, without the underwood which fills up the intermediate spaces, a forest here would resemble an immense collection of columns supporting a canopy of verdure ! In this respect, however, there exists a vast difference between the summits and sides of the mountains, and the bottom of the defiles and plains : the forests which cover the heights can only be passed by the assistance of the hatchet, the others may be traversed in any direction without much difficulty.

A difference of vegetation, extremely striking in spots so little removed from one another, produces an agreeable variety wherever it takes place. Here is the abode of savage misanthropy ; there the asylum of tender melancholy. This difference seems to prove that the exposure, the degree of elevation, and above all, the nature of the soil, have at least as much influence as the latitude, on the productions of the earth. It is to the want of not having sufficiently studied this co-operation of local causes, that we must attribute the numerous errors in the works of the learned, who, ambitious of referring the most contradictory observations to one common



common principle, obstinately persist in admitting no other cause for the difference of vegetation than the influence of the climate! Let them tell us, then, why the kingdom of Cachemire, which is only separated from other countries of Asia by a circular range of mountains, varies so much from them in the productions of its soil, that a European, on arriving there, might almost fancy himself in his own country: and why, in a part of the peninsula of Corea, situate nearly in the latitude of Paris, the winter is so rigorous in the beginning of September, that the inhabitants are obliged to have recourse to their fur garments. Let them tell us why, at Quito, immediately under the line, the heat and cold are so temperate, that during all the year the trees never cease to be alternately loaded with fruits, with leaves, and with flowers\*: and finally, why  
according

\* I shall only cite the three following examples of the influence of secondary causes. " The wind, which during all the winter  
" blows from the north, and passes over the icy regions of Nova  
" Zembla, renders the country watered by the Oby, and all Siberia so cold, that even at Tobolski, which lies in  $57^{\circ}$  N. there  
" are no fruit trees; while at Stockholm, and even in higher  
" latitudes, the Swedes have not only fruit trees, but pulse of  
" various kinds. This difference does not arise, as some have  
" supposed, from the sea of Lapland being less cold than that of  
" the Streights, or from the mountains of Nova Zembla being more  
" so than those of Lapland, but solely from the circumstance of  
" the Baltic and the gulph of Bothnia tempering a little the  
" verity

according to the testimony of Augustin de Zarate,  
 “ the difference of the temperature of the air is  
 “ so great in Peru from one league to another, that  
 “ those who are on the mountain suffer extremely  
 “ from the cold; while those on the plain, at  
 “ only two leagues distance, are obliged to seek  
 “ for shelter from the great and excessive heat.”\*  
 “ —Admit, Sir, with me, that much reading, and  
 a sedentary life, have made many would-be philo-  
 sophers.

“ verity of the north winds; while in Siberia on the contrary,  
 “ there is nothing to qualify the activity of the cold.”

*Buffon Histoire Naturelle. Tome 2.*

“ Although the city of Athens and its districts answer by their  
 “ position on the globe to the southern parts of Spain, the people  
 “ never enjoyed there that mild and temperate air which is  
 “ breathed by the inhabitants of the kingdom of Valencia.

“ Generally speaking, the winters on the continent of Greece  
 “ are extremely rigorous, and the summers excessively hot: nor  
 “ does there exist any determined relation between the nature of  
 “ the seasons, and the elevation of the pole, or the respective  
 “ latitude of the places.”

*Recherches Philosophiques sur les Grecs. Tome 1. Sect. 10.*

“ It is not absolutely by the degree of latitude that we should  
 “ judge of the heat or cold of a place. The nature of the soil,  
 “ the position of the mountains, and many external causes, have  
 “ so much influence on the climate, that the cold is often more  
 “ keen and more lasting in Piedmont, in the Milanese, and in  
 “ the north of Italy, than in France.”

*Voyage en Italie par M. Duclos, Page 5.*

\* *Histoire de la découverte et de la conquête du Pérou. Tome 2.*  
 Liv. 7. Chap. 6.

I am



I am convinced that in spite of the labours and researches of some French botanists, there is not yet a single branch of the natural history of Saint Domingo perfectly understood. It will neither be a travelling naturalist, nor an inquisitive planter that will supply what is deficient : the former will speedily be in want of time, health, and perseverance ; the latter will neither have the knowledge, the habits, nor the enthusiasm which this kind of study indispensably requires. This useful glory must be reserved for the government ; and although it should have no other end in view than that of extending its influence, it might easily accomplish its purpose by establishing a *Royal Plantation*, where the directors might by degrees collect all the indigenous productions of the vegetable kingdom which deserve to be known, either for their scarcity, their beauty, or their peculiar properties—a perfect discovery of which might throw new light on the science of botany, so useful to chemistry, so necessary to physic !

We reached the plantation of Monsf. Baudouin about nine o'clock. As we were expected, we found breakfast on the table—no unwelcome sight to a man who, for the first time in his life, had just walked eight or nine miles barefoot.

Monsf.

Monf. and Madame Baudouin appeared to be people of excellent fenfe, and their converfation was at once inſtructive and entertaining. Their free and open reception, the eaſe with which they did the honours of their houſe, their anxiety to render it agreeable to me, the complaiſance with which they answered my queſtions, and even my objections, all contributed to recal to my mind the ancient frankneſs, the good old hoſpitality of Saint Domingo.

I examined their plantation attentively. As it differed in ſome degree from all I had hitherto ſeen, I took the liberty of aſking the reaſon of it; and I learned with pleaſure, that ſtrangers to the ambition of going to die in a different land from that which ſupported them, the imperfections I diſcovered in ſome branches of their cultivation, in ſome details of their domeſtic œconomy, were leſs to be attributed to want of ſkill, than to the moderation of their deſires. “We have enough to  
“ live comfortably,” ſaid Monf. Baudouin to me;  
“ why ſhould I vex my old age to acquire an afflu-  
“ ence which I have never known, and which I do  
“ not find neceſſary to my happineſs? We ſhould  
“ at leaſt leave ſomething for our children to do.”

The plantation is ſituated in a defile, narrow, but picturesque. I ſaw there for the firſt time,  
the



the genipa, or fablier, one of the most beautiful trees of the Antilles. It takes its name from the shape of its fruit, which I scarce know how to describe to you, except by saying that it resembles a sand-box of the most elegant form. I brought one away with me, which I make use of at present, but which I fear I shall not use long, as this production, this fruit, this machine, or what you will, is liable to burst, and shiver to pieces, with an explosion like that of a petard, when it is least expected.

This singular effect cannot be attributed, as is generally supposed, to the sand with which it is filled, but to its acquiring a certain degree of maturity; since it sometimes takes place while the fruit is hanging on the tree.

We returned to the Desert by a different road, but nearly in the same manner as we came. I stood in need of a few days rest, as well to recover from the fatigues of my excursion, as to prepare myself for the chase of a wild boar, whose traces the overseer had discovered, and for whom he had set a trap from which he promised himself the fullest success.

On the day appointed for the expedition, I repaired before it was light, to the place where the  
negroes

negroes were assembled to work, for the purpose of taking with me my friend Mazimbo, whom I regarded with affection on account of his gaiety, his readiness to oblige, the sweetness of his disposition, and his attachment to his female companion Laoua. Fortune had put it into my power to save the life of this good and intelligent negroes, and in consequence of it they had both conceived such an attachment to me, that their gratitude knew no bounds.

I found Mazimbo leaning on his hoe, and looking with a pensive air on the horizon, now ready to kindle with the first beams of day. "What are you about, Mazimbo?" said I. "What are you looking at so attentively?" "*Pays. moi li là,*" "*Mine country there,*"—said he, stretching his arm towards the rising sun, while a tear trickled down his cheek. *Mine country there,* too, thought I, but I have hopes of seeing it again; thou, poor negro, will see thine no more.—"Can you shoot, Mazimbo?" "Yes, Massa, me know."—"Good! quit your hoe, then, and come with me."

While I was speaking, the overseer came up with a spare gun, which I immediately put into his hands: transported with this proof of confidence, Mazimbo turned proudly round to Laoua who gave him a smile; threw a glance of superiority upon  
his



his labouring companions, and at once forgot both Africa and the fun.

We had two long miles to pass, in a country broken with precipices, and covered with almost impenetrable woods, before we could reach the bottom of a sort of abyss. Mazimbo, with his musquet slung in a shoulder belt, and a hatchet in his hand, marched at our head, and freed us from a part of the lianes which obstructed our way. We followed as well as we could, walking, creeping, and sliding. Thanks to the advice of Mons. Baudouin, who took especial care of me, I more than once escaped mangling my hands in attempting to break my descent by the assistance of a kind of thorn, full of large prickles, as sharp as a razor.

When we had reached the hollow, where we expected to find the enemy, we separated for the purpose of surrounding, and assailing him in several places at once. But whether it was that he had scented us, or that he happened to be just then amusing himself elsewhere, we could find nothing but the impression of his body in a marshy place, where he had lately been wallowing. The overseer's trap, placed just by, was still untouched. To judge of his size by the print of his feet, he must have been an enormous animal. We attempted to follow his track, but the closeness of the under-  
wood,

wood, and the want of dogs, made us renounce all hopes of coming up with him.

Our return was attended with few difficulties, as the road was, in some measure, already cleared; and steep and craggy heights are generally more easy to climb than to descend.

Let who will destroy the Caledonian boar for me! I have had enough of the hunting of Saint Domingo, where all the game is comprised in the maroon hog, the wild pintado, the wood-pigeon, which is a bird of passage, and a few others, such as the turtle, nearly the size of our quail, and in great plenty; snipes, very scarce; parrots, at which it is almost impossible to get a shot; and the palm-tree bird, whose flesh is said to be delicious.

That which I should be the most curious to procure, dead or alive, is a humming-bird, which I have long been endeavouring to surprize: but this little creature whirls round with such rapidity, that the nicest attention is barely sufficient to discover him, without its ever being possible accurately to distinguish, much less to take aim at him.

There are yet other species of birds, one of which is honoured by the inhabitants with the name of nightingale, on account of his song, which is  
not



not immelodious. Very different from him whose name he usurps, an enemy of silence, and of shade, he never perches but on the tops of trees, and never sings but in the middle of the day.—A most injudicious choice of time, if he wishes to be heard—I have laid myself under a severe injunction never to shoot any of these charming companions of our solitude : in revenge, I have declared inexterminable war against snakes, which, as I am informed, are not venomous, but which are, notwithstanding, most disagreeable guests, and would be extremely familiar, if they were once tolerated. They differ in size ; some are not larger than those with us, while others are more than a foot in diameter : these are the scarcest and the least noxious. They haunt the magazines, where the planters see them with pleasure, as they are mortal enemies of the rats, which they destroy wherever they come.

LET-

## LETTER XXI.

*Desert,*  
*February 1798.*

THERE is a sort of people, Sir, who fancy it sufficient to set foot in a strange country to be under the necessity of finding every thing in it strange. —To this we must attribute the exaggeration with which travellers speak of the rains of Saint Domingo, which, according to them, never fall from the clouds but in torrents. The fact is, that it seldom rains here without being attended by storms, and that these boasted cataracts have little to distinguish them from showers of the same kind which fall in every other country.

Nature, which seems to follow a much more regular system here than elsewhere, appears to have assigned them an invariable epoch. Nor is it difficult to discover the cause of this difference, when we consider that the proximity of the great Regulator of the seasons must necessarily subject the climate of the torrid zone to a process more uniform than that of the places where his influence is weakened by distance.

The



The rains, which are almost always accompanied with thunder, never last long: during a part of the year, their absence is supplied by the dews, which fall in great abundance. It is proper to inform you, that what I said respecting the regular progression of the seasons, is not to be understood in its most rigorous sense. A fatal drought during all the rainy season, that is, from June to October, sometimes drives the planter to despair; while at others, heavy rains in the dry season, precipitate an unexpected and ruinous vegetation. All climates, all regions of the globe, are in like manner liable to exceptions, more or less rare, to the general laws of nature. No latitude appears more subject to invariable rules than that of the Delta, where it is said never to rain in summer; yet, in 1761 there fell such a quantity of water, that the greatest part of the villages of Lower Egypt, which are built principally of mud, were, if I may so express myself, utterly dissolved, and annihilated by it. \*

This difference of wet and dry is almost the only one which distinguishes the seasons. As the diurnal course of the sun divides the twenty-four hours into two parts, nearly equal, of day and night; his annual revolution, in like manner, produces a change in the temperature of the air, which is

\* *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte*, par M. C. F. Volney. Tome 1. Chap. 14.

scarcely

scarcely sensible. I am of opinion, however, that local causes have, in this respect, as great an influence as the rotatory motion of the globe †; in other words, that the difference of climate depends as much on the situation as on the season—so that the heat shall be more sensible in the plains in winter, than on the mountains in summer; while on the latter the summer's heat shall differ little from the winter's cold in the former—if we may use the word cold for a degree of temperature which permits you to breathe a little more at your ease, or, at most, to put on after sun-set a little warmer covering than the shirt and linen drawers you were clad in during the day.

I am very much inclined, Sir, to believe, that here, as well as every where else, the labours of mankind, in stripping the earth of the woods which covered it, and in thus exciting an extraordinary evaporation of the aqueous, saline, and metallic particles which nourish vegetation, and serve to develop a greater quantity of seed, have not only changed its nature, but even effected a considerable revolution in the climate.

This revolution, advantageous in some respects, became fatal to the fertility of the soil, from the

† In support of this assertion, see Anson's Voyage, Chap. 5. Book II.



moment the planter carried his hatchet into those parts of the woods which, placed like attracting pumps, on the brows of the hills, and the summits of the mountains, collect in vast reservoirs the sources of the springs and rivulets which trickle down their sides. \*

I have known several of these merciless destroyers bitterly lament the loss of the only spring which supplied them and their negroes with water, without ever suspecting it was to their own imprudence they owed this sudden privation, this loss—irreparable every where else, but which, by a singular combination of good and evil, is here sometimes abundantly repaired by that phenomenon which, on account of its frequency, and its effects, is at once the terror and the scourge of the human race, I mean an earthquake.

In consequence of a very laudable curiosity (for such I must call that which is directed to useful discoveries) many learned naturalists have endeavoured to explore the causes of these subterraneous convulsions. Three elements, fire, air, and water,

\* There is indeed an order that every proprietor shall leave a certain quantity of timber trees always growing: but it is no better observed than a number of others. What is wanted is an express and positive law.

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have

have each in their turn furnished the basis of different systems.

I am far from pretending to decide between the *Ignists*, the *Airists*, and the *Aquists*: but if I were obliged to speak my mind on the subject, I should not scruple to declare that they are all wrong; since the mania of systematizing makes them constantly reduce the operations of nature to an exclusive principle; while I see no reason for disallowing that different causes may very properly contribute to the production of one and the same effect. It is clear that two of these three principles do contribute—since if some supernatural power were suddenly to annihilate the most active of the three, I mean air, the other two, fire and water, would each remain equally inert and powerless. But what proves to a demonstration the combination of all the three elements in the production of volcanos, as well as of earthquakes, is a remark that the burning mountains of South America, such as those of Cotopaxi in Peru, discharge an equal quantity of water and of fire; and that, in the earthquake of 1692, which destroyed a part of Jamaica, torrents of boiling water were seen to spout from the shattered sides and summits of the mountains: these effects have been attributed to the influence of the tides; and, in my mind, with some degree of probability; since in the higher latitudes, at  
Kamtchatka,



Kamtchatka, for example, it has been observed that earthquakes are most frequent during the equinoxes, particularly the spring ones, when the tides are at the highest. \*

Amongst the observations to which this important phenomenon has given birth, there is one which might lead us to conclude it was unknown in a certain degree to remote antiquity, since although the mere motion of Jupiter's eye-brow shook the universe, all allusion to earthquakes seems to have escaped the lively and brilliant imagination of a people, with whom the most abstract philosophy constantly personified and covered with an allegorical veil, every thing appertaining to the vast domain of nature and art!

Instead of a dissertation sufficiently learned to enable you to form an opinion of the cause of earthquakes, I must content myself with offering a few observations which have probably escaped the notice of my predecessors: I say, probably; because, having determined in my own mind to read

\* See *L'Histoire et Description du Kamtchatka*, par M. Kracheninnikow. Tome 2. Page 58. In page 40 of the same volume, the author takes notice of a fact, too material to the subject I am upon to be omitted: it is, that in Kamtchatka lakes are always found on the summit of every high mountain, which had vomited smoke and fire.

as late as possible, the travellers who have written on Saint Domingo, that I might not prove, like so many others, the mere echo of those who have gone before me ; I cannot possibly determine whether some of them may not have anticipated me.

Of four earthquakes which I have already experienced, three took place about mid-day. The wind fell instantaneously ; a trembling, more or less violent, succeeded to this pause ; immediately after which the wind began to blow as before. Each of those earthquakes was followed, after an interval of twelve hours, by a kind of trepidation, a shock, which appeared to me infinitely less strong than that of the morning, yet sufficiently sensible to awaken me in a fright.

Along the southern coast is an opening or cavern, into which the sea penetrates to an unknown depth, and which the inhabitants call the Gulph. Every time the island is menaced with an earthquake, there issues from it a deep and hollow bellowing which scatters on every side terror and dismay. Thanks to the eagerness with which the Spaniards hastened to exterminate the indigenous inhabitants of the isle, we know no more of their manners, and of their moral and religious opinions, than what the necessity of justifying their destruction has dictated to their base and calumniating destroyers :  
but,



but, if the most enlightened people on the globe prostrated themselves before the oaks of Dodona, or the den of Trophonius; the unlettered and timid American must have been highly excusable in paying the worship of terror to this organ of destruction; and adoring, like the inhabitant of New Zealand, HIM WHO SHAKES THE EARTH.

I have furnished you with facts, Sir; leaving you to deduce from them the consequences your sagacity may judge most fit to found a reasonable system on the cause of earthquakes. I now return to such of their effects as are properly esteemed the least disastrous, namely, the drying up of a spring, or the sudden ingulphment of a torrent in one place, while they cause new fountains to bubble up in another, or excavate fresh beds for the rivers they have displaced.

If we must not rank in the number of inconveniences attached to the total extirpation of the woods, in breaking up new land, the fear of one day wanting timber for building and firing; if the climate allows us to derogate without danger from the axiom that a country should never have less than a fifth, nor more than a third of its soil in forests; yet it cannot have escaped you, that there is a consideration of positive utility, which should sometimes arrest the axe of the planter. Although deprived of  
every

every species of taste, and insensible to the beauties of rural nature, his heart and his understanding be equally insensible to every consideration but that of his interest, I would, nevertheless, put him in mind that this very interest, obliging him not to neglect, with respect to the instruments of his fortune, any of the means which contribute to their comfort and preservation; this very interest, I say, prescribes to him the necessity of leaving in his plantations, from space to space, some handsome trees, some shrubberies, where his negroes, who always dine in the open air, may assemble and eat together, and find under the shade of the woods they love, repose, which they do not love less, and new strength for new labours.

The three wretched objections which have been made to me, would not deserve mentioning, were it not that they will enable you to judge in some measure of the understanding of him who made them.

These clumps you speak of, said he, though they may only consist of three or four trees, and be very thinly spread, must necessarily occupy a portion of valuable land: besides, they would not only be injurious, by their shade, to the plants which stand near them, but they would also hold out to the idle negro an inducement to rest, an asylum to  
which



which he would sometimes escape from the vigilance of the drivers, and thus steal from your fortune some minutes of toil,

I feel all the importance of these objections; but I confess I have not sufficient courage to combat the two first seriously: with respect to the last; while I allow that we should not offer the idle additional opportunities of abusing this propensity of nature, I ask thee, avaricious planter! if thou hast any right to complain of thy negro?—Alas! the supineness with which he toils to enrich thee, is industry itself compared with the listlessness with which thou labourest to render him happy! God forbid that I should dispute thy right to accumulate in thy coffers the sweat and blood of these unhappy blacks; but deign, sometimes at least, to put thyself in their place: venture to judge of the weight of the yoke thou imposest on them, by the impatience with which thou supportest that of thy own laws—and in those moments when the hope alone of increasing one day the mass of thy enjoyments, induces thee to suffer some privations, condescend to recollect, that, wherever he throws his eyes, in the present, as well as the future, thy negro only sees, only hears those two terrible words, ALWAYS and NEVER.

LET-

## LETTER XXII.

*Jaquemel,*  
*March 1790.*

I AM just arrived from Port-au-Prince, Sir ; whither my landlord had prevailed upon me to accompany him ; and, unless I deceive myself, I imagine I have collected observations enough to furnish two new letters.

We set out from Jaquemel on horseback, attended by a single negro—a carpenter by trade, and raised by us to the rank of valet de chambre, and groom for the journey.

Our first halt was at the house of a planter, whose name I have forgotten, where we dined ; and who received us with more ceremony than M. Baudouin had done. A storm which came on just as we were taking leave, determined us to stay with him all night.

Let those who to feel their existence are obliged to live in others ; those who want the degree of apathy, or the measure of reason necessary to enable them to suffice for themselves ; those, in fine, who have



have any repugnance to the cares of domestic life ; let all those, I say, be extremely cautious how they become inhabitants of Saint Domingo. With respect to myself, who am never less alone than when alone ; and who know by experience that a person may live in a desert, provided he knows how to create occupations analogous to his taste ; I am perfectly convinced that in spite of the loneliness, and the profound solitude of this abode, the proprietor may be happy in it ;—as may every man who, with moderate experience, moderate desires, and a taste for agricultural life, contents himself with seconding nature, and enjoying what lies before him, without attempting to invite, either the luxury of the arts, or the chimerical pretensions of vanity, into the asylum of simplicity and peace.

The first dawning of day found us on horseback, directing our rout towards Leogane, along the high road made by government in this part of the island. Generally speaking, it is but thinly peopled, so that we travelled almost constantly through the woods, passing and repassing more than twenty times in the space of a few hours, the river which, after innumerable meandrings, empties itself into the sea at Jaquemel.

The country we crossed, however wild and savage, was far from being destitute of charms.

For

For although one of the principal beauties of a landscape be the contrast of cultivated with uncultivated nature ; yet there are certainly beauties of detail, and of character, which appertain exclusively to the latter, and which are never found but in mountainous regions, where they spring up at every step from the variety of aspects and forms ; from the gradations of light and shade, and from the course, now flow, now rapid, of innumerable streams.

What you will, however, have some difficulty, Sir, to believe of a country so rich as this, in its productions and its specie, is, that of the two kinds of plantations which we passed from time to time in these deserts, one shewed us only the picture of indolence in the last stage of wretchedness ; and the other, that of the negligence and disorder of poverty, contrasted with the pretensions of opulence directed by the most execrable taste. Thus you would sometimes meet an elegant carriage drawn by horses, or mules of different colours, and of different sizes, with ropes for traces, covered with the most filthy housings, and driven by a postilion bedaubed with gold, and barefoot !

We arrived at Mons. Denis' by nine o'clock. I found in this planter, who had passed a part of his youth in France, more information than usually falls



falls to the lot of his brethren. A garden well kept, a library not ill furnished, and a judicious plan which he had formed for rebuilding his house, and ornamenting the approaches to it, supplied us with materials for a long conversation, and for many agreeable walks.

A very handsome Creole lady of the neighbourhood dropt in *by chance*, and contributed to the pleasures of a dinner, as good as it was possible to give unexpected guests; and during which we talked over again the merits of Monf. Denis' new plan. While his charming neighbour seemed intirely absorbed in listening to the different details, I could see plainly, in spite of all her manœuvres to deceive me, the point at which she aimed—the conquest of our host.

The moment the sun, now sinking in the west, permitted us to continue our journey, we sat out for Madame Fauchet's, where we intended to sleep. Her house lay pretty near the sea, on the direct road to Leogane.

Although Madame Fauchet's was only a cotton plantation, as unproductive as those which a long course of cultivation has exhausted generally are; it produced a considerable income, from the various advantages which a skilful manager may always  
derive

derive from the vent of such articles as garden-stuff, fruit, forage, wood, cattle and poultry, when placed in the vicinity of a port, or a road-stead.

These kind of establishments have not, I must confess, the eclat of an opulent sugar or coffee plantation ; but to the advantage of requiring an infinitely less number of hands, and to their returns, founded on the uninterrupted demand for articles of the first necessity, independent of the despotism and the caprices of commerce ; may be joined a daily profit, so much the more to be reckoned upon, as the proprietor is not doomed, in this case, to see the interest of an enormous debt, or the wish to extricate himself from a burthensome engagement, absorb with the fruits of his toil, the hopes of his fortune to come.

We found Madame Fauchet too much engaged in the superintendence of her farm to expect from her the little attentions which travellers, more particular, might probably have exacted. Our design in calling upon her was to have left our horses there till our return, and to have borrowed of her, according to the good old custom, a carriage to take us to Leogane ; but her carriage was unfortunately out of repair, her black postilion sick, and her mules already engaged. At the house of this lady I saw the only table of Manciniller wood which, I believe,



believe, is to be found in Saint Domingo. I defy the united efforts of all the arts to produce any thing so perfectly beautiful.

Thanks to the custom of letting the horses run loose in the savannahs, to the difficulty of catching them again, and to the sloth of the negroes, always more eager to return than to set out, we did not get on horseback till the morning was far advanced, yet still in time to reach Leogane by the usual hour of dining. It was in the neighbourhood of this town that the indigenous inhabitants of the island had two establishments under the names of *Taguana* and *Xaragua*, the latter of which is celebrated as the scene of a most atrocious barbarity committed by a horde of Spaniards, who, at a treat given them by the pretended queen *Anacoana*, strangled their entertainer, after having burnt alive, and even in the very room where the tables were spread, the caciques whom she had invited to the feast!

The town of Leogane, built near the sea, and consisting of a few streets, which terminate in a large square, was formerly the residence of the governors. At present it would be a mere desert without the advantage of an anchoring ground, which allows vessels to take on board the sugars, &c. cultivated in the plain to which it gives name.

We

We were civilly received, and set down to a very good dinner by Messrs. Schiredan and Gatchair, merchants, whose carriage and horses were luckily disengaged, and ready to convey us to Port-au-Prince, which we reached about night-fall.

PORT-AU-PRINCE!—When a person has been acquainted in France with colonists, and above all with Creole colonists, he cannot approach Port-au-Prince, now become the residence of the civil and military powers, the capital of the richest country on the face of the globe! the most fertile in delights! the throne of luxury! the center of voluptuousness! without experiencing that secret shivering, that pleasing and vague anxiety which precedes admiration, and prepares the soul for enthusiasm—To be brief; I entered between two rows of huts, jolting along a dusty track called a street, and searching in vain for Persepolis, amongst a chaotic mass of wooden barracks!

I defy, Sir, the most volcanic imagination to resist the first effects of such a surprize. In a state of stupefaction, I asked my companion where we were? At Port-au-Prince.—Yes, just as we are at Paris, in the suburbs of Saint Marceau, I suppose?—You will see that to-morrow.

The



The next day, although my eagerness to satisfy myself made me get up before the sun, yet ten o'clock surprized me, still seeking in the true Port-au-Prince, the *Pot-au-Pince* \* of the inhabitants, without being able to find it. I discovered, indeed, from time to time, some casars, more large, more ornamented than the rest. An insulated edifice of stone, and of a tolerably regular construction, announced to me the residence of the governor; I saw, also, a market place, which the present intendant, Monf. Barbet de Marbois, has lately decorated with two fountains, in a good taste, but which are absolutely inaccessible from the filth which the negroes, who come for water, never fail to leave behind them. Adjoining this place, on a rising ground which overlooks it, I observed too, a little esplanade, planted with a few rows of young trees, and a basin with a *jet d'eau* in the midst of it, destined to serve for a terrace to the new government offices, which they propose building—but all this, even granting the streets were more regular than they are, would scarcely constitute a city of the third rank with us. Besides, most of this is the work of Monf. de Marbois, and of the last two or three years; and clearly proves that the inhabitants of Saint Domingo saw, and still see, the present Port-au-Prince as the Jews are said to see the New Jerusalem, in the old one.

\* The Creolian method of pronunciation.

That

That the presence of the government, the residence of the administrative bodies, a play-house, a garrison, a port, a place of commerce, should maintain at Port-au-Prince (the rendezvous of speculators and fortune hunters of every kind) a bustle which is to be found in no other part of the island, is natural enough: but, notwithstanding, it is no less true, that abating some difference which relates merely to manners and customs, the comparison which most forcibly strikes one, at the first sight of this famous city, is, that of a Tartar camp: I must add too, that with the best disposition to favour the illusion, and with all the indulgence which patriotic prejudice can warrant, every reasonable man must feel himself obliged to me for putting an end to the absurd exaggerations with which folly and disingenuity have hitherto misled the inexperienced.

I dined with Mons. de Marbois, at whose table I fancied myself, for some hours, in Europe.

This gentleman, whose personal services, and whose merits have raised him to the place he at present enjoys, proposes shortly to publish a COMPTE RENDU: of this I will endeavour to procure you a copy; which will amply supply whatever I may have left deficient, on the population, political œconomy, commercial arrangements, &c. of the colony.



In spite of the public undertakings, the useful embellishments, the necessary improvements for which the inhabitants are indebted to Monf. de Marbois, they reproach him with being more ministerial than patriotic, more a courtier than a citizen, more a revenue officer than an administrator—and the two first of these designations already begin to assume a meaning highly dangerous for him who wishes to found on them his pretensions to public esteem.

If Monf. de Marbois' *Compte Rendu* be the result of all these qualities combined; if its end be to lay open the knaveries of the subordinate officers of his department, and force the blood-suckers to disgorge what they have swallowed, the best method of silencing the clamours of the one, and the calumnies of the other, will be to prove, by facts, that without injuring the interests which the sovereign has confided to his care, his administration has sensibly increased the prosperity of Saint Domingo.

## LETTER XXIII.

*Jaquemel,*  
*March 1799.*

IT is, Sir, to a former governor, to the Count de la Luzerne, at present minister of the marine, that the establishment of a *Jardin du Roi*, or Royal Garden at Port-au-Prince, is universally said to be owing. It is as well furnished as could reasonably be expected from its infant state: its declension or prosperity must depend in future on the degree of importance his successors may attach to this monument of his taste for the natural history of plants.

It is much to be lamented that the fate of a useful institution should thus depend on the inclination, the caprice, or the ignorance of an individual. I tremble whenever I call to mind what a mass of treasures the fanatic and stupid pride of the savage Omar deprived us of, when he committed to the flames that invaluable collection of human knowledge. HERE the inconvenience we have to dread springs from a vice of a different nature—from perpetual change; from the short stay of the chiefs in a country to which they bring nothing but imperfect



perfect theories ; but principles which experience hourly proves to be either false or absurd. Scarcely has a governor (supposing him to be desirous of not acting at random) time to acquire the local knowledge which ought to form the basis of his administration, ere he sees himself replaced by a successor still more a novice than himself.

This detestable plan owes its origin to the rapidity with which certain governors accumulated a scandalous fortune. From that period, the place ceased to be given to merit, that it might become the prey of the ignorance, the thoughtlessness, and the rapacity of this or that grandee, who, arriving here a ruined man, is expected, under pain of passing for a knave or a fool, to make his re-appearance in France, after three years at farthest, with the same fortune which three successive generations of spend-thrifts scarcely sufficed to dissipate.

What becomes of the public property in such hands ? And how, and at whose expence, is this prodigious wealth acquired ? The governor is here neither a merchant, nor a planter : his dignity interdicts him from stock-jobbing, and from all the petty resources which a culpable indulgence abandons to the less scrupulous industry of the subalterns. His salary is in truth considerable, but his expences are proportioned to it ; and however

œconomical we may suppose him, it is difficult to believe that an income of some hundred thousand livres can produce in a few years, a clear saving of some millions! When to this, Sir, we add the consideration that the two branches of government, civil and military, are furcharged with a multitude of controulers, commissaries, clerks, receivers, inspectors, generals, commandants, &c. who all labour with equal zeal and perseverance to justify the confidence which their respective superiors have in their talents, we shall no longer be surprized to find that the colonists have sometimes found in their despair, a sufficient degree of courage to send back to France, a governor who has been blind enough to measure the extent of his power by the distance which separated him from its source.

The present governor, *Monf. Le Comte Duchillau*, is, at this time engaged in making the tour of the island. The beneficent views which he has already manifested, distinguish him, as much as his military reputation, from the mass of his predecessors. They have encouraged the inhabitants to hope from his administration every thing that can be expected from a man determined to sacrifice a number of secondary considerations to the general welfare. This, and still more, his well known resolution to disengage the colony from a part of her fetters, by throwing open the ports to the  
Americans,



Americans, had already created an alarm amongst the merchants. In vain do a majority of the colonists call for this measure; in vain do the blessings they daily invoke on his head, sanction its propriety: the minority, composed of interested and designing men, will always be able by their gold and their intrigues, to prevent its taking effect; and thus prove to Mons. Duchillau, that here as well as elsewhere, the power of his brethren is just the reverse of what it should be—unlimited to do evil, and circumscribed within the narrowest bounds, when there is a question of doing good.

I believe, Sir, that I have now told you all it is possible to say of Port-au-Prince. The excessive heat, and the unwholesomeness of the air, compelled us to quit, a day sooner than we intended, a town rebuilt on the brink of the very gulph which had already swallowed a former one. Would you believe, Sir, that the confidence with which the inhabitants have erected a new dwelling on the ruins of the old, is the result of a syllogism! “The mine is already sprung,” say they; “*ergo*, there is no more danger!” But who will venture to assure us that the last explosion cleared all the passages which communicate with the central fire? Who will take upon him to assert that the falling in of the earth has so completely choaked up all the subterraneous channels, that the flames, which  
gather

gather strength from what they feed on, cannot form new vents for themselves? In spite of the admirable logic of these reasoners, I am dreadfully afraid that the inhabitants of Port-au-Prince have rebuilt their town upon a sophism!

To the insalubrity arising from its position in the bottom of a bay, and on a burning soil, must be added that of an immense swamp, which, intirely covered with mangroves, borders a part of the road leading to Leogane, and communicates immediately with the sea. A mephitic vapour perpetually exhales from it, which is borne along the coast by the sea-breeze, and precipitated with accumulated poison directly on Port-au-Prince.

On my return I examined the position of this nuisance with more attention than when I passed it before, and thought I perceived a possibility of removing it altogether, by an operation—immense, if you please, but certainly not impracticable. I would run a dyke of considerable elevation along the border, which would separate it effectually from the sea: this would necessarily give the bottom a degree of consistence, sufficient to enable me to carry a number of drains quite across it; and if these were directed with a tolerable degree of skill, I have no doubt but that the marsh would speedily disappear.

I do



I do not pretend, Sir, to know how many millions of livres, nor how many thousand negroes such an undertaking might require: but if sovereigns sometimes sacrifice millions of piaftres, and millions of men in the defence, or usurpation of a nook of land, less valuable than this might be made, I should think the love of the public good, the preservation of the present generation, and, in that of the future, to be motives sufficiently cogent to justify the expence. The Dutch have constructed at Batavia, at Surinam, and even in Holland, on this very principle, works much more extensive, and with far less prospect of success.

We dined, between Port-au-Prince and Leogane, at a sugar planter's, with whom I became acquainted at the first of these places.—I do not know how the rich inhabitants of the plain contrive to manage it; but nothing resembles a state of wretchedness so much as their opulence!

From thence we went to sleep at Leogane. We put up at a very good inn, kept by a free negro, who is more than an hundred years old.

This man, by no means deficient in good sense, and blessed with an excellent memory, had belonged to one of the first governors. He is well worth attending to by such as wish to have accurate notions  
on

on the early state of the colony. He was present at laying the foundation of the first house in Leogane. I had the curiosity to look for it, and readily found its ruins, by the directions he gave me.— Thus the new world has already its antiquities !

At Leogane we found our horses, who were perfectly recovered from their fatigue, and brought us hither in one day, without baiting on the road.

If this expedition has increased my local knowledge, and corrected some of my opinions, the alteration, Sir, has not always been favourable to the inhabitants of Saint Domingo. Amongst a variety of anecdotes, some of which may be exaggerated or untrue, there is one which the multiplicity, and respectability of the proofs do not permit me to call in doubt, in spite of its atrocity.

A lady, whom I have seen, a young lady, and one of the handsomest in the island, gave a grand dinner. Furious at seeing a dish of pastry brought to the table overdone, she ordered her negro cook to be seized, and *thrown into the oven, yet glowing with heat*——And this horrible Megæra, whose name I suppress out of respect to her family ; this infernal fiend whom public execration ought to drive with every mark of abhorrence from society ;  
this



this worthy rival of the *too famous* Chaperon \*, is followed, and admired——for she is rich and beautiful !

So much for what I have heard, and now for what I have seen.

The day after my return, I was walking before the casa of a planter with one of his neighbours, when we overheard him bid a negro go into the inclosure of this very neighbour, pull up two young trees which he pointed out to him, and re-plant them immediately on a terrace he was then forming.

The negro went : the neighbour followed him, surprized him in the fact, and brought him to his master, whom I had by this time joined, in the hope of witnessing a scene of confusion which promised to be amusing.

Conceive, Sir, what passed in my mind, when, on the complaint of the neighbour, I heard the master coldly order another of his negroes to tie

\* A planter of Saint Domingo, who, in the same circumstances, seeing the heat shrivel and draw open the lips of the unhappy negro, exclaimed in a fury, “ The rascal laughs.”

*Nouveau Voyage aux Isles Françaises de L'Amérique.* Tome 1. Chap. 1.

the

the pretended culprit to a ladder, and give him an hundred lashes ! We were both of us struck with such astonishment, that, stupified, pale, and shuddering, while the unhappy negro received the barbarous chastisement in silence, we looked at one another without being able to utter a single word — And he who ordered, he who thus punished his own crime on the blind instrument of his will ; at once the dastardly perpetrator and the unfeeling witness of the most atrocious injustice, is here one of the first organs of the law, the official protector of innocence ! Heavens ! if a pitiful respect for decorum forbids me to devote the name of this monster to eternal infamy, let me at least be permitted to hope that Divine Justice will hear the cries of the sufferer, and sooner or later accumulate on the tyrant's head, all the weight of its vengeance !

LET-



## LETTER XXIV.

*Desert.*  
*April 1790.*

BEHOLD me, Sir, once more returned to the Desert: but since my expedition to Port-au-Prince, my aversion for this unfortunate country has increased to such a degree, that I have seriously determined to quit it. This determination has just been strengthened by one of those events which slightly arrest the attention of the public elsewhere, but which, in places where men, less distracted by the tumult of large societies, feel more interested in what passes in their little circles, leave an impression of melancholy as profound as it is lasting.

A man of birth, whom misfortunes (which he allowed were in some measure owing to his own conduct) had, in common with many other victims of too accredited an error, brought here in the hopes of speedily acquiring a brilliant fortune, had vegetated for many years as a teacher of Italian, in a country where they are not over-anxious to understand even their mother tongue: when by dint of repeated applications he procured the rank of a sub-lieutenant in the Colonial Marechaussée.

It

It is the duty of this corps to assist in the execution of the rigorous measures which the Chamber of Commerce exercises towards its debtors. As the salary is low, the individuals that compose it, endeavour to make some amends by their industry for the smallness of their pay, in a country where bread is fifteen sous a pound—that is to say, they rob that they may not starve.

Monf. de \* \* \*, came sometimes to see us. He spoke several languages with facility, was well acquainted with Europe, and had been in the English colonies. I was fond of questioning him respecting the domestic œconomy of the inhabitants, which is much better regulated than our own.

A few days since, after having chatted till nine o'clock, he left us to buy some gun-powder. I asked him if he was going a shooting? “*Yes,*” replied he, “*to-morrow I intend to kill a very singular animal.*” Here we parted, and the first thing I heard the next morning was, that he had blown his brains out; but not without the precaution of arranging his affairs in the most accurate manner, and writing several letters; in one of which he gave an account of the motives that determined him “to quit his post before he was relieved.”

I then



I then called to mind that before my journey to Port-au-Prince, the conversation turning on the subject of suicide \*, on which we disagreed, he repeated with emphasis the following lines :

Quand on a tout perdu, quand on n'a plus d'espoir,  
La vie est une opprobre, et la mort un devoir.

It would have been easy for me to demonstrate the fallacy of this thought, by proving to him that the misfortune of having "lost every thing" does not necessarily deliver us up to "opprobrium," or to any kind of humiliation which can "make death" a duty ; but I contented myself with answering

\* It was brought on by the fate of a planter who was just then said to have hanged himself. It is true that his young widow is vehemently suspected of having saved him the trouble, with the assistance of a stout and vigorous negro, who has since acquired a striking ascendancy over his mistress.

In a casa, not far from that which I inhabit, a mulatto, a married man, had taken a female mulatto to live with him. From disgust, or repentance, he became sincerely desirous of returning to his wife. The olive-complexioned Medea dissembled her rage, the more effectually to secure her vengeance. She continued to live on terms of friendship with both parties, and sometimes invited them to her house, where at a dinner she one day gave them, she poisoned both the husband and the wife. The man died with every symptom of violence, the woman lives still, but in a languishing state. The two events furnished a subject of conversation for a few days ; but no one ever took a single step to bring the perpetrator of such an atrocity to justice—such are the morals of the "fortunate inhabitants" of Saint Domingo!

his

his distich by another not quite so poetical, and by a saying of one of our old writers :

“ Il est plus grand, plus difficile  
De souffrir le malheur, que de s'en delivrer.”

“ There is much more courage in wearing out the  
“ chain which confines us than in snapping it.”\*  
Here the subject dropped ; but the unhappy man did not tell me, that after having frequently attempted, and always in vain, to regulate his expences by his very moderate salary, he had at length had the weakness to do like the rest. Sent to a planter with a writ of arrest, he had been induced by a bribe of a few Portugal pieces, to suspend the execution and to report that the debtor was not to be found !

This action, which, stripped of its interested motive, would have been merely an official falsehood, and which, from the circumstances attending it, actually appeared to be nothing more than taking money for a piece of service ; was in his eyes a baseness, an infamy which nothing but death could expiate : and you will allow, Sir, that if there needs nothing but a sophism and a moment of error, to give way to a strong temptation, there is still more delicacy, and probity, than courage required, to punish oneself like this unfortunate creature. Yes,

\* *Essais de Montaigne.* Tome 2. Chap. 3.



the man who knew no other refuge than the grave against the remorse of a bad action, was worthy not to have committed it.

This melancholy event holds out a striking, but I fear a useless lesson, to the associates of the poor wretch who gave it; and to all those governments, which by the most impolitic of all calculations, leave nothing for its agents to subsist on but illicit resources; and thus consent to partake the odium and the crimes they necessitate. Will monarchs never learn that it is altogether useless to pretend to public esteem, while they sacrifice the care of detecting and punishing fraud, to an œconomy as barbarous as it is immoral! Will they never comprehend that the gratuitous service of knaves is precisely that for which the country pays most dear!

Determined, as I am, to quit Saint Domingo as soon as possible; I shall be so much the more expeditious in furnishing you with the residue of my observations; as I find that the fermentation of the mother country has already reached the colonies, whose ruin I shall never cease to think she is preparing, until it can be proved to me that two things may subsist together as incompatible as absolute equality \*, on which they pretend to found civil liberty;

\* There are two kinds of equality, which should not be confounded; a legal equality, which is the true political equality; and

liberty ; and slavery, without which you have seen the colonies cannot possibly exist.

With a frivolity of character which doubts of nothing ; with a versatility of disposition, which attaches itself to all things, and searches into none ; with an impetuosity of imagination which sees an obstacle but to overleap it, without embarrassing itself with what may be on the other side ; you are in danger of not arriving at the truth, before you have exhausted every combination of error, and accumulated, if I may so venture to express myself, on the head of a single generation, ALL THE EVILS scattered over a long succession of ages †— This is what I fear for your country—but to return to Saint Domingo.

and an absolute, unconditional equality—a chimera which never did, never can, and never will exist in any human society whatever!

† Who of us is not at present perfectly convinced that the French Revolution has violated more laws, usurped more property, cost more tears, shed more blood, excited more animosities, and committed more crimes in the short space of five years, than the most unbridled, and savage despotism ever committed in as many centuries! May this terrible example of the abuse of the most sacred principles, serve for a lesson to all succeeding times, and to every people who shall be tempted to imitate the French!

You



You will find in the *Compte Rendu* of *Monf. de Marbois* as exact an account as can possibly be obtained of the black population of this colony. You will there see, in the comparative statement of births and deaths, how much the latter exceed the former; and like me, you will be astonished at the bold assertion of *Monf. Raynal*—that the slaves born on the plantations are sufficient to replace those who perish by labour, &c. \*

In contradiction to this error, I can venture, Sir, to assure you, the researches I have made on the subject prove that out of every hundred negroes imported, nearly twenty, that is a fifth, die in the first year; while only five, that is, a twentieth, are born within the same period; and of these, one at least, is sure to perish in the fifteen first days, of the *tetanos*, or locked-jaw.

This rapid destruction of the negroes is not to be attributed solely to change of climate. Owing either to a habit of body, naturally bad, or to an unwholesome regimen, the mass of their blood is so corrupt, that the slightest scratch soon degenerates into a most dangerous wound. If to this original vice, we add the infirmities they necessarily contract in the middle passage; where they are crowded for

\* *Histoire philosophique et politique des Etablissements et du Commerce des Européens, dans les deux Indes. Tome 7.*

Q

months

months together, like sheep at a fair, on the boards of a close deck, ill dried, and worse aired; we shall not be astonished to find that, cruelly treated at the slightest symptom of impatience, wretchedly fed, wasted by chagrin, and devoured by rage, whole cargoes of these unhappy beings perish before they reach the shores where they are doomed to be sold; and where the greatest part of them, persuaded that they would not be bought like flesh in a market, if they were not intended to serve for the same use, firmly believe they are destined to be eaten.

And, indeed, this consideration has powerfully excited, not the humanity, but the industry of the traders. Careless of the loss, for which they indemnify themselves by raising the price, they have sought, and at length found out the infernal art of giving the pustulous carcases which people those moving sepulchres, an appearance of health and strength which deceives and not unfrequently ruins a planter, who is too œconomical, or too poor (and the greater number are in this predicament) to have the negroes he purchases visited by an honest surgeon, capable of ascertaining the real state of their health. Without this precaution, he will find, after his negroes have enjoyed a few days of repose, the venom, become more active, and more virulent by repulsion, beginning to manifest itself with the most alarming symptoms: and he may account himself fortunate,



fortunate, if by dint of skill, care, and expence, he can preserve four-fifths of his purchase. I have known five out of eleven die in a few months ! and I now ask you, Sir, if Plato was wrong when he wished to punish severely every citizen who addicted himself exclusively to commerce ? \*

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LETTER XXV.

AT the head of the dreadful catalogue of evils to which the negroes are subject, must be placed the yaws : it is, I believe, the only one they have communicated to their masters, and “ may be called “ in good French *la grosse vérole* ”—says the reverend father Labat. †

I do not know, Sir, that the radical cure for this evil has yet been discovered †, any more than the method

\* *Lois. Liv. 2.*

† *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles Françaises de L'Amérique. Tome 2. Chap. 5.*

† It may not be without its use to subjoin the following recipe, extracted from the *Histoire de la Louisiane. Tome 1.*

“ Take

method of preventing great numbers of negroes from indulging that depravity of taste, which prompts them to devour with the most sensual avidity, not only carrion, toads, snakes, &c. but even earth. This throws them speedily into a kind of marasmus or consumption, which baffles all the resources of the healing art.

Death, however, is not the only event, which deprives the planters of the capital they have sacrificed to the purchase of negroes. The species of desertion, here called marooning, is to be found in a greater or less degree, upon every estate; nor will rigour, kindness, or chains, or iron collars ever correct the slave who has once addicted himself to this kind of life. Their escape is singularly favoured by the woods, with which several cantons, and particularly those which border on the Spanish possessions, are still covered; while on the other hand, the want of food, compelling them to hover about the inhabited parts, facilitates the means of retaking them.

“ Take iron-rust, reduced to an impalpable powder, and passed  
 “ through a fine sieve; moisten it with citron juice, so that it  
 “ may have the consistence of ointment, spread it on a linen rag,  
 “ rubbed over with wheel-grease, or fresh lard, and apply it  
 “ night and morning.”



To obviate, as much as possible, the inconveniences of desertion, the negroes are marked on the breast with a hot iron, which imprints the name of their master, and the parish to which he belongs. When they are taken, they are conveyed to the goal of the capital of the district, and their marks, &c. advertised in the public papers, that they may be reclaimed within a term prescribed. If this be suffered to elapse they are sold by auction, and commonly far below (not their value, for it is scarcely possible to retain them,) but the market price. It is seldom that any but poor planters, or bad calculators, such as the greater part of misers usually are, suffer themselves to be tempted by the bait of a good bargain.

It is the custom of the colonists to estimate their income by the number of their slaves, reckoning each at fifteen hundred livres; so that he who has sixty, concludes he has ninety thousand livres a year.

You will find, Sir, in Labat \*, a list of receipts and expences; from which it appears that in his time, that is, in 1694, when all colonial produce was at a low rate, a sugar work of one hundred and twenty negroes (the expence of which he estimates

\* *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles Françaises de L'Amérique.* Tome 4. Chap. 1.

at 6,600 livres, and the receipts at 44,640) usually yielded, every deduction made, a clear annual profit of 38,030 livres. But it should be observed that Labat forgets to take into the account, the current waste of negroes, who must be replaced, the deficiencies occasioned by maladies, maroonage, &c. fires, and daily repairs ; the mortality of the cattle employed in the carriage of the produce ; the ravages of hurricanes, and unprofitable seasons ; delays of payment, and the difficulties of exportation during war ; and, last of all, the excessive interest the merchants exact for advances, which few of the planters are in a condition to dispense with. From all which I conclude, (not from Labat's calculation, but my own, which reduces the net profit one third) that the proprietor of sixty blacks has in fact, but sixty thousand livres a year : and I should esteem myself happy to possess, for my whole fortune, what he has less than this sum.

It is extraordinary that the prodigious losses to which desertion and sickness expose the planters, should not yet have taught some of them to adopt such precautionary measures as have a tendency to correct, a part at least, of the evils from which they originate.

The



The general practice is to allot a piece of ground for the erection of the negro-casas ; here on a regular plan ; there, scattered at random ; according to the caprice of the master, or the local advantages.

Each of these casas is occupied by three or four slaves, absolutely abandoned to their own intellects, when the proprietors have not the attention to mingle the new-comers with the old—for, let the gang be but a little numerous, and I will defy the most active oversight to succeed in maintaining order amongst them, and above all, cleanliness, so necessary to health.

The improvident negro judges of the value of every thing merely by its present utility, without any idea of the necessity of taking care of it, to prolong its use. A perfect contrast to the man of the ancient poet Regnier, of the

*Dilayant qui toujours a l'œil sur l'avenir ;*

he will break the vessel from which he has just drank, as we break the shell of an egg after having eaten it. Time has no future tense for him, he only knows the present and the past. However sensible he may be to certain privations, he is, as I have already told you, incapable of the degree of foresight which prevents them. He will think no more then, of repairing his casa, which is tumbling into ruin, than his compatriot the ape thinks of maintaining,

maintaining, by the addition of fresh fuel, the fire at which he warms himself with so much delight: and such, or nearly such, is every where the character of the man of nature *made perfect* by slavery!

These traits of the negro character are familiar to every planter. Why then do the greater part neglect to provide against the inconveniences which result from them, by a system of domestic policy adapted to the country, the men, and the circumstances?

I have reflected a good deal on the best mode of establishment for the negroes; and in spite of its inconveniences, have hit on nothing better than the following; which I should, at least, have attempted to put in practice, if fortune had ever destined me to become a planter.

I lay it down as an axiom, that a gang of negroes must be looked upon as a body of foldiers; who can only be assembled, supported, and rendered effective, by means of a uniform plan of proceeding, and an exact discipline.

Instead, then, of dispersing my negroes in an indeterminate number of cascas, I would unite them in a single one, which should be large, commodious, neat and well aired. I would subject them to  
a proper



a proper regimen, obliging them to mess together in small parties, like soldiers and sailors.

Thus collected, they would be under the immediate and constant inspection of the driver, the overseer, and even the master: and, consequently, less at liberty to give way to the depravity of their taste, to the spirit of independence so natural to every insulated being, and to those impressions of grief and melancholy, which solitude is singularly calculated to favour, and which bring on a disgust of life in too many of them.

Instead of allotting them, as is generally the case, a portion of ground to cultivate for their own use; at the extremity of my possessions, I would assign them a spot regularly set out, round their habitation, which this enclosure of little gardens would singularly embellish; to which, if the nature of the ground permitted it, I would add a basin, or canal, where they should be obliged to bathe themselves at least once a day: since I am persuaded that the greatest part of the cutaneous diseases to which they are subject, arises, in a certain degree, from the neglect of a precaution so necessary to health in every hot country, that the legislators of the East have made it a religious duty. Even although it had no other advantage than that of lessening the rank odour which exhales from the  
negroes

negroes skins, and which the connoisseurs in fumette compare to that of the house-leek, it would still be with me a sufficient reason for attending to it.

The married negroes alone, or such as style themselves so, should have the privilege of inhabiting a separate casa, without being permitted, as they now are, to change their wives much oftener than their shirts. This prerogative in favour of marriages would necessarily encrease them, and population would follow.

Besides Saturday, which is given up to the slaves as a day of repose, I would institute periodical festivals, sometimes consecrated to dancing, which they are so passionately fond of; and sometimes to public sports, in which emulation should contend for the prizes set apart for the reward of superior strength and dexterity. I would choose for these purposes, the day of my birth, my marriage, my arrival in the island, &c.; and doubt not, Sir, but that our common interest would be flattered by the relations of kindness, and reciprocal attachment, which the connecting of their pleasures with the most interesting epochs of my life would establish between us.

Independent



Independent of the motive of security which pleads powerfully for the system of lodging the negroes in a single house, it may be looked upon as an additional obstacle, not only to the nocturnal visits which some of them are in the habit of making to the neighbouring plantations, but also to those fittings up which engross a great part of the night, deprive them of the repose necessary to recruit their wasted strength, and in a short time completely exhaust them.

Humanity undoubtedly revolts against this excessive precaution (of which it is but too often the pretext) when we reflect that the night is the only time we allow the negro to enjoy himself—We should see with what gust he relishes those moments of tranquillity and freedom! We should hear with what warmth, with what volubility, and at the same time, with what precision of ideas, with what rectitude of judgment, this being, gloomy and taciturn during the day, and now cowering over his fire, recites, talks, gesticulates, reasons, judges, approves, or condemns, both his master and every thing around him!

It is here that we should observe the negro, if we would learn to appreciate him by his own decisions. Although these nocturnal meetings ought not to be tolerated without the greatest precaution,  
I constantly

I constantly attend them, not to interrupt them, nor to influence their opinions by my presence, but to collect, under favour of the night, original traits of the character of a species of men, which, to be well governed, has as much need as our own of being well known; and although, like most other eave-droppers, I have seldom had the good fortune to hear my own eulogium, I have more than once discovered, in the principles by which they judged me, those by which my conduct towards them might conveniently be regulated. It is here, that, fully informed my kindness sometimes passed amongst them for weakness, I conceived the necessity of replacing it, not by rigour, but by the most scrupulous justice. It is here, that instructed of the extravagant opinion they had formed of the infallibility of my judgment, I discovered in their very error, the secret of enforcing it, by suffering them to believe I had found THAT out by mere dint of genius, for which I was solely indebted to my ears: in a word, Sir, it is here that a voice, without being conscious of it, has told me in a thousand different ways, that FORCE, MODERATED BY INDULGENCE, AND DIRECTED BY JUSTICE, IS THE ONLY EFFICACIOUS METHOD OF CONDUCTING MEN, WHATEVER BE THEIR CONDITION OR THEIR COUNTRY!

LET-



## LETTER XXVI.

*Desert,  
April 1790.*

I FANCIED, Sir, when I sent off the preceding letter, that I had spoken to you, for the last time, of the negroes, hoping that what I had said in the course of my correspondence, was sufficient to enable you to form a decided opinion upon them; but observing that you insist at some length, in one of your latest letters, 1°. On the ideas upon which the negro founds his opinion of the principles of justice and injustice: 2°. On the true point of view in which we should consider his mode of existence: and 3°. On the use which I imagine he would make of his liberty; I thought it right, instead of amusing, and probably misleading you by abstract and metaphysical speculations, to hazard an experiment, which should put it in my power to decide the first question by what may be called material proof.

For this purpose, I took advantage of the absence of the overseer to announce to the negro driver, that I would take his functions upon myself, and consequently superintend the works. I could not  
restrain

refrain from smiling at the joy this news occasioned amongst the negroes ; for you will readily suppose that I was not altogether ignorant of the motive.

As it was now crop time, the engagement I had entered into simply consisted in examining, at the return of the negroes from the plantation, if each of them had brought home in his basket the quantity of coffee-berries which had been set him as a task.

I fully expected what happened the first day. My friends the blacks are no less subject than my friends the whites to confound weakness with goodness. With the exception of Mazimbo, none of the others brought home a third of their contingent. Without launching out into reproaches, I ordered that every one of them should receive five smart lashes : this was executed under my own eye ; and I then declared the punishment should be doubled for those that failed on the morrow, tripled for the day after, and so on in progression.

All but six took the hint ; and these received the ten lashes amidst the hisses of their companions. The third day there were only three who were curious enough to try if I would adhere to my resolution : they could no longer doubt it after  
receiving



receiving fifteen lashes each for their negligence, and an additional five for their obstinacy. My plan, Sir, operated beyond my hopes ; for it was now who should exceed the prescribed measure : I therefore thought it necessary to recompence my docile pupils for their zeal, by an extraordinary allowance of spirits ; and still more by placing so much confidence in them as to pass their baskets thenceforward, with a very superficial inspection ; fully persuaded that whoever should have been tempted to abuse it, would have found an informer in each of his companions.

You will easily comprehend, that the manner in which I exercised this corrective polity, furnished them with ample materials for their nocturnal conversations : from this period, however, I thought I could perceive that to the benevolence which many of them already felt for me, was joined a sentiment of respect, intirely independent of the colour which distinguished us.

Undoubtedly, if these poor creatures had been desirous of tracing matters to the source, and discussing the right by virtue of which I erected myself into a supreme arbiter of the use of their faculties, they would have discovered that I was still very unjust in my justice : but, more reasonable in their ignorance, than we in our knowledge, and  
 confounding

confounding power with right; the sentiment of their utter inability (for so they esteem it) to shake off a yoke which they deem, if not legitimate, at least inevitable, supplies the place of that rational calculation which subjects our individual wills to the expression of the general will, to the law.

A few days after I risked an experiment, not ill adapted to ascertain the degree of impression made on them by the rigour to which I had seen myself systematically driven; and the alteration it had produced in the attachment they had hitherto borne me.

The architect had left so small an interval between the casa we inhabited, and the steep acclivity of the mountain to which it was, as it were, fixed, that upon the least rain, the water which trickled down its sides completely inundated us. It became then indispensably necessary to remedy this inconvenience as soon as possible, which could only be done by removing, for a space equal to the whole length of the casa, a portion of the slope not less than ten or twelve feet in thickness. I was the better pleased with my plan, as it gave me an opportunity, which I resolved to seize, of transforming the dry and arid ground gained by the operation, between the mountain and the house, into a parterre of flowers and verdure.

As



As crop time fell in the rainy season, the necessity of drying the coffee before it was stowed away, required us not to lose a moment of this precious time: consequently we were obliged to suppress the weekly holiday which is every where allowed the negroes.

The work which I had projected might be executed in half a day. I ordered then the driver to propose to them, to employ the morning of the ensuing Saturday in clearing away the earth, &c. in return for which, they were to have the rest of the day to themselves; and seven or eight hours of liberty are not a trifling boon to a slave! my proposition was unanimously—rejected: but it was just as unanimously resolved, that instead of returning to their cascas when the labours of the day were over, as usual, they would come, and work by the light of the *bois-chandelle* \*, (the wood-candle) on my slope, as many hours as I thought proper, nay, all the night, if it should be necessary.

\* I have seen many naturalists, botanists, &c. very much astonished, when I have told them of the fine fir trees of Saint Domingo. They were so perfectly convinced that this species of tree was only to be found in the temperate, and polar regions, that they had some difficulty to refrain from laughing in my face. 'Tis the wood of this tree which the negroes call *bois chandelle*, and of which they make their torches. For the rest, I can venture to assure the gentlemen that resinous wood appears to belong so peculiarly to the torrid zone, that most of the trees of Saint Domingo yield great quantities of gum.

R

If

If I was affected by this proof of a devotion to my interests, which I had no right to expect; I was still more so, by the alacrity with which they undertook, and the promptitude with which they executed the work. Neither the driver, nor myself had any occasion to urge them on; it was who should do the most, the best, the quickest—so that what I had imagined would be the labour of more than half a day, was completed in two hours.

Examine well, Sir, whether among the generous actions with which you are acquainted, there are many to be found which surpass, in true delicacy, this proceeding of a parcel of poor slaves; calling to mind at the same time, that their natural indolence, and the force which subjects them to labour without pay, incline them to look upon every kind of work as a punishment.

With respect to your second question; an enthusiast would not hesitate to answer it by the single word SLAVERY.

It is, however, certain that, thanks to the climate, which reduces their wants to a mere trifle; thanks to education, which leaves them ignorant of rights and enjoyments, of which they can form no idea; thanks to the thoughtlessness of their character,



character, and the fickleness of their humour ; and, lastly, to the interest which their owners have in their well-doing, the lot of a negro slave, all things considered, and especially when he has the happiness of belonging to a master, who does not measure his humanity by his avarice, is preferable to that of the peasantry of a great part of Europe.— Let us descend to particulars.

Without any other property than the uncertain retribution of an uncertain labour ; or with a property which nothing but the most active industry can render equal to his necessities, the subsistence of the peasant, and a family, frequently numerous, depends from day to day on accident, on the state of his health, and on a number of circumstances, which it either is not in his power to foresee, or which, if foreseen, prove a new source of wretchedness. View him alternately humbled by the prosperity, always humiliating, of his equals ; by the pride of his superiors ; by the comparison of his poverty with their opulence ; and, finally, by all the distinctions which compose the long chain of subordination, of which he is always the last link.

He is free, it is true, at least he is taught to believe so ; but what is this liberty for a man, who,

R 2

in

in whatever direction he attempts to move, is either detained, or pushed back into the circle of wretchedness from which he hoped to escape; now by the want of means, which only renders his poverty doubly poignant; and now by the opinion of the world, which makes him but the more sensible of his own nullity.

He is, certainly, if not better, at least more clad than the negro: but the negro has no need of cloaths. The habit which with the one is merely an article of luxury, is with the other an object of indispensable necessity.

The cottage of the one is larger, and better furnished than the casa of the other; but its reparations, and its moveables alone absorb no inconsiderable part of his earnings: it must be repaired in summer, it must be warmed in winter.

The one can only provide food and raiment, discharge his taxes, &c. with specie, difficult to be procured; but of which the other has no need.

The European by dint of labour, of numerous privations, and of unremitting industry, has scarcely succeeded in acquiring a moment's ease, before a melancholy presage of the future intervenes, and blasts his fugitive delights. He must think of his children,



children, who are growing up, and of old age which is fast approaching. If he looks round he sees his own wants multiplied in each of the individuals who call upon him for shelter, food, and raiment. If he turns an eye upon himself, he beholds the enervated arms which will shortly support him no more in the combat he has still to wage with poverty—even after a struggle of threescore years !

The negro, too, has his sufferings ; I do not wish to deny it : but, exonerated of the care of providing for himself for the present, and for his family hereafter, he suffers less from the hardships necessarily attached to his condition, than from the privation of certain enjoyments.

The unhappiness of the latter therefore is, if I may so express myself, local and negative : that of the former universal and positive. It is diffused over all his existence, and over all his connections ; over the future as well as the present. The perception of what he suffers, and the remembrance of what he has suffered, incessantly admonish him of the sufferings he has yet to undergo !

When the negro has eaten his banana he goes to sleep—and though a hurricane destroy the hopes of the planter ; though fire consume the buildings erected

erected at a vast expence ; though subterraneous commotions ingulph whole cities ; though the scourge of war spread devastation over our plains, or strew the ocean with the wrecks of our scattered fleets—what is all this to him ! Enveloped in his blanket, and tranquilly seated on the ruins, he sees with the same eye, the smoke which exhales from his pipe, and the torrents of flame which devour the prospects of a whole generation !

I come, Sir, to your last question.

You ask me what use I think the negroes would make of their liberty if it were *restored* to them ?

*Restored* does not appear to me to be the proper word.

All I know, or can discover of the natives of Africa, convinces me that they vegetate under a despotism more or less absurd, or in the most deplorable anarchy.

I believe then, Sir, that every people whom education shall not have brought up for liberty, will necessarily make an ill use of that which they may owe to a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances. See, what you have done with yours ! You, a civilized, and enlightened people, habituated



ted to reflect on a faculty, to whose use you have not been altogether strangers; and then take upon yourselves the task of resolving, in the best manner you can, the problem you propounded for my solution.

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LETTER XXVII.

*Desert,*  
*April 1790.*

TO exculpate myself, Sir, from the reproach of having bounded my observations on Saint Domingo to futile details, to moral and critical speculations, and to imperfect sketches of cultivation, commerce, and population, I have thought it necessary to attend more seriously to these three last objects, and to treat of them more at large: for surely, Sir, if it imports us to know man, considered as a moral and metaphysical being, it is not of less importance to acquire just ideas of what constitutes his political and material existence, and of his relative interests as a citizen, planter, proprietor, trader, &c.

Let

Let us begin, then, with forming a precise notion of the ground on which he displays his activity, his intelligence, and his industry.

The surface of the French part of Saint Domingo measures from 1900 to 2000 square leagues.

This extent is divided into three parts or *Coasts*, heretofore named *Bands*, from the little breadth of the first establishments; which, in the origin of all the colonies, stretched along the shore without penetrating into the interior of the country.

These coasts, or departments, to the number of three, i. e. that of the North, that of the West, and that of the South, are divided into *Chefs-Lieux*, or Jurisdictions; which, in their turn, are subdivided into quarters, or parishes, as you will see in the following Table.

TABLE.



## T A B L E.

CHEFS-LIEUX, OR JURISDICTIONS.		QUARTERS, OR PARISHES.	Number of Negroes.
Partie du Nord.	Le Cap.	Le Cap et dependances - -	21,613
		La petite Ance et la plaine du Nord	11 122
		L'Acul, Limonade, et Sainte Sufanne	19,876
		Morin et la Grande Rivière - -	18,554
		Le Dondon et Marmelade - - -	17,376
		Le Limbé, et le Port Margot - -	15,978
		Plaifance et le Borgne - - -	15,018
Idem.	Le Fort Dauphin.	Le Fort Dauphin - - - -	10,004
	Le Port de Paix.	Ouânaminthe et Vallière - - -	9,987
		Le Terrier rouge et le trou - -	15,476
	Le Mole.	Le Port de Paix, Le Petit St. Louis, } Jean Rabel, et Le Gros Morne, }	29,540
		Le Mole et Bombarde - - -	3,183
Partie de l' Ouest.	Port-au-Prince.	Le Port-au-Prince et la Croix des Bou- quets - - - - -	42,848
	Léogane.	L'Arcahaye - - - - -	18,553
		Mirebalais - - - - -	10,902
	St. Marc.	Léogane - - - - -	14,896
		Saint Marc, la petite Rivière, Les } Verettes et les Gonaives - }	57,216
	Le Petit Goave.	Le Petit Goave, le Grand Goave, et } le fond des négres - }	18,829
		L'Ance á Vaux et le petit trou -	13,229
	Jeremie.	Jérémie, et le Cap Dame Marie -	20,774
Partie du Sud.	Les Cayes, Cap Tiburon. St. Louis. Jacmel.	Les Cayes et Torbeck - -	30,937
		Le Cap Tiburon et les Coteaux -	8,153
		St. Louis, Cavaillon, et Aquin	18,785
		Jacmel, les Cayes, et Baynel -	21,151
Total.		51 Parishes.	450,000

The population of the French territory appears,  
from an enumeration made this year, exclusive of  
the

the whites, and negroes, of whose residence, &c. there were no legal documents, to amount to 38,360 whites; 8,370 people of colour; and 455,000 blacks: to which if we add the crews of the vessels, the garrisons, &c. we may fairly carry the total of the population to 506,000 souls.

In the five last years the progressive augmentation has been more than 150,000 negroes, since at the end of 1785 the colony possessed only 300,000.

But whatever confidence we may have in the accuracy of an enlightened Administrator, we must still be persuaded that there are things with regard to which his judgment cannot be looked upon as infallible: in the first place, because he is forced to see many things by the eyes of others, and consequently, to make reports the fidelity of which he cannot always verify; in the second, because, in spite of all his cares and watching, he cannot determine with perfect exactness, the positive quantity of the legal importations and exportations of foreigners, nor the amount of the contraband trade, nor the frauds of the French merchants themselves—Add to this, that as none but an odious, perhaps I might almost say, an impracticable inquisition, can ever succeed in obtaining an accurate list of the black population; the administrator charged  
with



with the enumeration, will always find himself obliged to establish his estimate on approximate calculations.

He may, undoubtedly, certify himself from one year to another, of the geometrical extent of the ground in cultivation; but it will be absolutely impossible for him to speak decisively on the species of culture, the quantity of produce, or the positive value of the exports; because that, the two first are subject to great variations, that the buyer and the seller have an interest in defrauding the customs; that in so immense a line of coast as that of Saint Domingo, it is as impossible to prevent sugars, &c. from being privately shipped, as to obstruct the landing of different articles from interlopers; and, finally, that however carefully the commandants of the different districts, generally planters themselves, may proceed to the enregistering the plantations, they are always deceived, and most commonly—I speak from authority—by their own consent! After this, can you doubt the source of the errors which are found in the computations of the most clear-sighted administrators; and which are all to the advantage of the population, the cultivation, and the commerce of the colony?

If I were obliged, with respect to the contrabanders for example, to support my assertion by facts,

facts, I could tell you, Sir, that amongst the artifices they make use of to approach, and linger in the road-steads of Saint Domingo, there is one, which, although stale, is not for that the less successful.

A ship arrives under a pretence of distress; has her case stated in a regular verbal-process, and obtains in consequence of it the necessary time for the repairs of which she is supposed to stand in need. Enveloped in the friendly veil of night, the *Verbaliser* and the *Verbalisee* come to a *proper* understanding: the captain purchases in public a mast or a yard, which he does not want—and a troop of trusty slaves do the rest. The contrabander now *repaired*, continues her rout, and Monsieur the Intendant knows, you may be sure, as little of the value of what she has brought, as of what she has taken away.

It is very wicked, undoubtedly, to cheat the king in this manner of his dues, and to give, for the sake of a paltry interest, a preference to strangers! It must not, however, be concealed that there exists one consideration, not wholly unknown I suspect, to the Chamber of Commerce, which sometimes induces the planter, even the most scrupulous with respect to the transgression of prohibitory laws, to forego without much regret, his repugnance



pugnance to deceive in this manner his *liberal benefactor*—and this consideration is still “that paltry interest.” For example, codfish is an article of great consumption amongst the negroes: it is, therefore, of consequence that the colony should be always supplied with it. The average demand is from 27,000 to 30,000 quintals; and the French merchants having only imported this season 2,610, the government, which begins to comprehend that the general good should not be always sacrificed to particular advantages, permitted foreigners to import 25,276. This reasonable indulgence has been so much the more beneficial to the colonist, as the subjects of the United States, on account of their proximity, can sell their fish here in a better condition, and at a much lower price than the French merchants \*: the latter, therefore, necessarily alarmed, and fearing government might carry its condescension for the colonies so far as to permit, from the same motive, the importation of salt provisions, have eagerly set themselves to decry those of North America; whose brine, say they, has not, like ours, the qualities necessary to preserve what

\* If these people would take proper measures for sending by a direct rout from Newfoundland to the colonies, a quantity of fish equal to the demand, the planters might undoubtedly have it cheaper and of a better quality: but the unfortunate habitude of considering the islands as mere drains for the corruptions of the mother country, makes them see nothing in them but common sewers destined to absorb the refuse of their magazines.

is pickled in it! It is clear to me that if among the number of other articles of American commerce, such as iron, flour, cattle, &c. lumber alone has escaped the depreciating sentence of our traders \*, the indulgence is intirely owing to the difficulty of supplying the demand, which the increased cultivation of sugar has nearly doubled within the last fifteen years.

The number of foreign ships, principally American, which in 1788 assisted in furnishing Saint Domingo with provisions, was considerable. Now, Sir, if in conformity to the wishes of the Chamber of Commerce, the ports of the island had been shut to them, what would have been the consequence to the inhabitants?—that they would have been in absolute want of many articles of the first necessity, which composed the whole cargoes of these vessels.

“ And what is that to us,” say the French merchants? “ Can the pleasure of gratifying a few ima-

\* It is to the Genius of commerce, *perfected* to a certain point, that we must look for the source of those vices whose origin has so long puzzled us. It is this which, having ruined Tyre, Carthage, &c. took refuge in Italy, and brought us from Florence that miserable Italian policy, which after having taught us to speculate on every thing, even on virtue and on vice, has ended with precipitating Europe into the profoundest abyss of corruption, into egoism!

ginary



ginary wants be suffered to enter into competition with the real wrong which is done to the mother country, in thus depriving her of the profits she must have made of the merchandize you have sold to foreigners? How long, pray, has it been the fashion to strip the mother to clothe the daughter! And are not the colonies the daughters of France? Besides, there is a commercial maxim from which we cannot derogate, and which, in spite of our inability to take off all your produce, makes it highly necessary that it should be offered to no one else—this maxim is, that the less competition there happens to be, the more the various productions of the soil will accumulate in the magazines of the planter, and the more it will be in our power to beat down their price”—For the rest, Sir, whatever Avidity, which always fancies it has lost what another has gained, may be pleased to say, it is certain that the want of specie, which is felt more than ever in the United States at this moment, on account of their direct commerce with China and the East Indies; it is certain, I say, that this want obliges the Americans to take piaſtres for their commodities in preference to the produce of the islands; of which they carry off no more than is absolutely necessary for ballast. Thus, it appears that the injury they do our carrying trade is scarce worth noticing—but were it greater, were it even as momentous as it is said to be, I should think it  
more

more than compensated by the advantages the colonies derive from them.—But tell me, Sir, if it does not appear strange to you that a body of speculators, who are incessantly claiming for themselves the most unbounded privileges, should recognize no other rule of action than that of the most revolting despotism in their dealings with the planter, or the manufacturer, who is not absolutely their slave!——It is necessary to comprehend thoroughly how astonishingly personal interest perverts every idea of justice and injustice, to enable us to see nothing in all this but the inevitable effect of its influence on our feeble reason.



## LETTER XXVIII.

*Defert,  
April 1790.*

FIVE important objects, Sir, will furnish materials for this letter: 1°. The exportation; 2°. The establishments appropriated to cultivation, manufactures, and industry; 3°. The produce of the taxes in general; 4°. The debts active and passive; and 5°. The revenue of the treasury, and its distribution into different departments.

To avoid the tedious calculation of fractions, the result of which after all, cannot be of any importance, I shall dispense with adding the sous and deniers to the total of each article. I should previously inform you that the valuation is made on the footing of the colonial exchange at present, that is, at  $33\frac{1}{2}$ ; so that the livre must be estimated at thirty sous. \*

\* As it would be difficult to find in English corresponding terms for the legal and official phraseology which repeatedly occurs in this letter, the translator has contented himself with merely copying the original.

EXPORTATION.

1788.		1789.	Average Value.
93,177,512 lbs.	Muscovado Sugar	93,573,300	55,000,000
70,227,709 —	Clayed Sugar	47,516,531	67,670,781
68,151,181 —	Coffee —	76,835,219	51,890,748
6,286,126 —	Cotton —	7,004,278	17,572,252
930,016 —	Indigo —	758,628	10,875,120
150,000 —	Cocoa —	—	120,000
29,530 hhds.	Molasses —	—	1,947,132
303 Casks	Rum —	—	21,816
12,995 No.	Hides —	—	172,218
1,500,000 lbs.	Dying Woods	—	40,000
5,000 —	Tortoise shell	—	50,000
	Total		205,370,067

ESTABLISHMENTS.

The mass of commodities which is produced by the joint efforts of cultivation, commerce, and industry, arises from

1788.	1789.	Estimation.
451 Plantations of Clay- ed, or White Sugar }	451	103,730,000
341 Muscovado ditto	362	100,000,000
2,810 Coffee estates —	3117	70,200,000
705 Cotton ditto —	789	30,000,000
3,097 Indigo works —	3151	100,000,000
69 Cocoa groves —	54	900,000
173 Distilleries —	182	200,000
3 Tan pits —	6	950,000
313 Lime-kilns —	370	6,600,000
28 Potteries —	29	
33 Brick-kilns —	36	
12,000 Horned Cattle		1,400,000
16,000 Horses and Mules		6,440,000
	Total	420,420,000



If we add to these different items, 1,137,500,000 livres, for the value of 455,000 slaves, the whole of the fixed and moveable property of the planters of Saint Domingo will amount to the surprizing sum of 1,557,870,000 livres.

AMOUNT OF THE TAXES ON COLONIAL PRODUCE.

Of that on White Sugar	—	2,528,197	Livres.
Brown Sugar	—	1,677,195	————
Coffec	—	1,226,720	————
Indigo	—	465,000	————
Cotton	—	785,766	————
Molasses	—	221,275	————
Rum	—	1,821	————
Hides	—	18,184	————
Dying woods, &c.	—	————	————

Total 6,924,166

which are comprised in the receipt of the *Caisse de la Marine*, or Marine Chest.

It would be a tedious, and indeed a needless affectation of accuracy, to enter article by article into all the details of the General Receipt of the Treasury. I shall content myself, therefore, with laying before you the total of the sums received, and paid into the several Offices. If I enter at greater length into the article of expence, it will

be merely to do justice to the views of Administration by distinguishing the sums employed by it in various institutions, in works of public utility, or in acts of justice and benevolence.

## GENERAL RECEIPT.

	Livres. *
La Caisse de la Marine has received	10,838,348
—— Generale — —	1,171,290
—— des Libertés — —	694,906
—— des Droits Domaniaux	780,300
—— des Consignations —	184,500
—— de L' Entrepôt —	459,078
—— des Invalids, et fonds } d'Armements — }	584,592
Total	14,673,014

As the real state of the active and passive debts of a country is indispensably necessary to enable you to form a correct opinion of its commercial, agricultural, and financial situation, I have joined an exact list of those of the colony.

\* As there is a sensible difference between the result of the totals of the *Compte Rendu* of M. de Marbois, and the *Tables* of his successor, I have followed the last as being the latest in time.

ACT-



# ACTIVE DEBTS,

or

MONIES OWING TO THE DIFFERENT CAISSES,  
from 1788 to 1791.

The total amount of the public credit stood in 1788 at 14,927,030 livres.

Of this there was paid in 1789 and 1790 the sum of 5,730,901 livres, which reduced the debt to 9,196,129 livres.

# PASSIVE DEBTS,

or

MONIES OWED BY THE DIFFERENT CAISSES.

Livres.

The public debt amounted in 1788 to 4,942,416

There were paid in 1789 and 1790 3,580,480

Will remain due in 1791 1,361,936

It is natural enough to suppose, Sir, that in the accompts delivered in by the Administrators, the total of the disbursements seldom fails to tally exactly with the total of the receipts: this is in the regular course of things—and it is not every where  
one

one has the satisfaction of seeing the public revenues so well administered as to leave, as they did here, a surplus of 1,614,888 livres, at the year's end.

If you now ask me, where the agents of government find the means of acquiring such rapid fortunes, I shall ingenuously own to you that I know not: but at the same time I have very little doubt if the Director of the Fortifications, and other works, were, for example, to receive 917,560 livres for those objects, but that the total of his expences would also amount to 917,560 livres!

It may be a matter of indifference to you to be informed that the military, civil and judicial administration of the colony absorbs, in salaries alone, 3,349,550 livres; but you will see with pleasure, that of the overplus of the general receipts of 14,673,014 livres, there have been expended, either in public works, or in donations of justice and benevolence, the following sums.

On



On the Hospitals	—	—	196,000 <i>livres</i> .
Canals and Fountains	—	—	331,299
Indemnities and Gratifications			109,575
Pensions to the fathers and mothers of 10 and 12 children		}	71,769
Expences of a Quay at Port- au-Prince	—	—	72,731
The Road at Jaquemel	—		86,621
The King's Garden	—		50,912
Works done at the Cape	—		70,464
Watering and Washing Places		}	651,058
Gifts and Gratifications	—		40,956
Reclaiming run-away negroes			46,521
Total			<u>1,727,902</u>

## LETTER XXIX.

*Desert, May 1790.*

AMONGST the questions, Sir, which philosophy amuses itself with discussing, one of the least idle is undoubtedly that of the influence which education, climate, and government successively have on man. But it is with this, as with the cause  
of

of earthquakes : let us have nothing exclusive, and we shall understand one another.

Man is at one and the same time a moral, physical, and social being ; and, as such, directly subject to the influence of education, climate, and government.

It is always then, not under the one or the other of these relations, but under the three united, that he should be considered : for, if he be no where exclusively the man of nature, education, or laws, he is however, every where, more or less, the one or the other.

What is then the inhabitant of Saint Domingo ?

That which every man must be who is born under a burning atmosphere, with a vicious education, and a feeble government. His character has no decided traits ; he is neither corrupt, nor virtuous ; neither citizen, nor slave. But this character will form itself the instant education and government, in concert with nature, shall occupy themselves with the care of giving him morals. At present we ought to set the higher value upon his good qualities, as his education has hitherto been calculated to give him none but bad ones.

I should



I should engage myself in a very long, a very abstruse, and a very useless work, if I undertook to say how education and government, in strict conformity with nature, ought to labour to form the moral character, and decide the political existence of the colonists, agreeable to principles founded on the inevitable influence of the climate, and on the odious system which flings dishonour here on the most useful, the most universal of the arts; that which the author of the *Ami des Hommes* \* calls, with so much reason, the “art of innocence and virtue;” by confiding it to degraded beings, whose labours, on that very account, it becomes impossible to participate, without participating at the same time, (at least in their opinion) the nullity, meanness, and disgrace to which they are condemned.

No one has ever denied agriculture the precious advantage of maintaining the morals which a sedentary life, luxury, and sloth, necessarily corrupt. Here, then, is a resource already lost to the legislature; and, consequently, a new motive for supplying its absence by education.

The most shocking contradictions have no longer any thing striking in them, when a person has once

\* Tome 1. Chap. 7.

lost sight of a certain number of immutable truths. Hence the colonist who would blush to work with his negress, does not blush to live with her in a state of intimacy, which necessarily establishes between them a kind of equality, at which prejudice exclaims in vain :

*L'âne repond, l'amour égale tout.*

To no purpose did the legislator, in the origin of the colonies, attempt to obviate one of the most fatal consequences of slavery, by subjecting to a penalty of two thousand pounds of refined sugar, every white convicted of having a child by a negress. This inconsequent and immoral law was quickly repealed on account of the abortions it occasioned : but I am ignorant whether government drew from the transaction the proper inference—that it is absurd to think of applying laws preservative of good morals to an order of things against nature.

Supposing, for a moment, this abuse of intimacy between the master and the slave should have no other inconvenience than weakening the first principle of all subordination, the respect of the subordinate, it would even then be a great calamity. Elsewhere this respect might be replaced by esteem ; but esteem is the first step towards equality. To  
esteem,



esteem, it is necessary to judge, and the slave ought not to judge his master.

But a far more pernicious consequence of this abuse is its influence on the education of the children, for whom example is a lesson much more easy to be retained than precepts, always at variance with the conduct of him who gives them. If, as they say, "wit cannot be taught by rule," much less can virtue.

It is a matter, Sir, in which we are not much interested, to know whether we are born virtuous or vicious : the point of real importance is to enable education to favour the developement of the good, in proportion as it represses that of the bad, whose seeds, however they come, manifest themselves in us from the moment of our birth.

Very few fathers, even with the assistance of the best treatises on education, are in a condition to superintend that of their children. The greater part of them beget young ones without embarrassing themselves about making them one day men. Add to this, that I do not know, with the exception of *Emilius*, any theory which goes beyond a mere physical education. The true secret of moral education is easily divined\* : it consists in never offer-

ing

\* What in the name of wonder can the Marquis de Langle  
" mean

ing to our children any but good models to follow. If this principle were generally adopted, it must necessarily ensue, as it is the disposition of mankind to improve on what is already done, that the manners of the human race would be ameliorated.

To tell you what should be done to insure the children of Saint Domingo a good education, would be to tell you precisely every thing that is not done at present. What, for example, can we expect from the impious custom of giving them to be suckled by negro women, who, however well chosen we may suppose them, and however carefully watched, seldom reach the period of weaning without communicating to the infant they nourish, the venom of a corrupted milk, and the vices of a temperament to whose lascivious and fiery nature, a forced continence has but added fresh fuel! The nursling of the wolf of Latium necessarily became the leader of a band of robbers who *preluded*, by the rape of the Sabines, to the conquest of the universe. What can we expect, Sir, from the culpable negligence which abandons the children to the society of a troop of domestic slaves, who have not the most distant idea of the sense attached to the word modesty! What can we expect from

mean by saying that "a moral education is an impossibility, a  
"wild and extravagant idea." See "*Mon Voyage en Espagne.*"  
Tome 2. Page 139.

the



the disorder of public morals, the licentiousness of conversation, and the daily habitude of seeing punishments inflicted, of which the least shocking part is the barbarity ! To sum all, what can we expect from the influence of an education begun and finished in places where modesty, goodness, justice, and mercy are empty sounds ; and where the first words which the young Creole learns to lisp, are a command to lacerate with whips the bosom of his nurse !

These considerations have not escaped such of the colonists as are capable of appreciating the advantage of a better education : but, either from incapacity, or idleness, they have discovered no better remedy for the evil than sending their children to France ; as if it was not just as improper to educate the children of Saint Domingo at Paris, as it would be to educate the children of Paris at Saint Domingo !

This is surely running upon Sylla to avoid Charybdis. What has the French education in common with the kind of life which is led in the colonies ? The plantations where these children are born, and where they are destined to live, differ as much from the convent or college to which they are sent, as the productions of the new world from those of the old. How is it possible that their con-  
stitutions,

stitutions, formed by a mode of living, and under an atmosphere so different from those which await them, should not suffer a material change by this sudden transition from one to the other? I look, Sir, on the practice of generalizing, to a certain degree, the principles of a physical education, as a direct violation of nature. Allowing it to be advantageous for a vagabond to habituate himself to every climate; still the man who is doomed to live on the soil which his ancestors have cultivated, and to die where he was born, ought to have no other regimen, no other temperament than those of his native country. How would the Laplander, brought up under the equator, be able to live amidst the eternal ice of the pole?—Wretched, alas! is he, whom his mother placed in an oaken cradle, and whom mercenary hands have buried in a coffin of mahogany!

What may serve to justify in some measure the inhabitants of Saint Domingo on this head, is the privation of every kind of resource, of every establishment adapted to give their children a certain portion of instruction, of useful knowledge, of agreeable accomplishments. However superfluous these accessory ornaments of the education of the rich may be esteemed elsewhere, I regard them as highly necessary in a country where population, thinly scattered, compels the greatest  
part



part of the colonists to live in a kind of solitude, which exposes them to all the evils of listlessness and ennui.

People do not sufficiently reflect, Sir, on the tyranny these two pests of human kind exercise over the morals. They forget that it was for the purpose of withdrawing the croud from their influence, the legislators of antiquity instituted so many feasts and public games.

On the other hand, when activity, which is one of our first passions, can find no other object than pleasure, the abuse of it will speedily change the passion into habit, and give birth to disgust, and satiety, and to all the turpitude of a depraved and sickly mind. It is then the dearest of our interests, our proper happiness, which points out to us the preservation of good morals as the source of all our enjoyments.

To recommend, however, the cultivation of the arts, of agreeable talents, of useful knowledge, will probably appear strange to the sectaries of that celebrated man who, in the too famous question of their influence on the happiness of society, boldly declared for the negative—But let not the partisans of the opinion, that arts corrupt the morals, be too much

much alarmed: there is nothing to corrupt at Saint Domingo!

Those who affected at the time to consider the sentiment of the citizen of Geneva as a paradox, no less new than singular, must surely have designedly forgotten that Solon, happening to be present at the representation of one of Thespis' pieces, cried out, long before him, "I am afraid these  
 " poetic fictions, these ingenious deceptions, will  
 " speedily pass from the stage into real life;" and that Xenophon had written two thousand years before Rousseau was born, "that the greater part of  
 " the arts enfeeble the bodies of those who exercise them, by compelling them to sit in the shade,  
 " or by the fire; and that they have neither leisure  
 " for their friends, nor for the republic." \*

The confusion this famous question occasioned, must be wholly attributed to the incorrect manner in which it was stated by the academy of Dijon. I am ignorant, for my own part, of the tendency which arts and sciences have to corrupt the morals; but I well know, that, cause or effect, they are nowhere in estimation but amongst nations already much corrupted. In this case, they must be looked upon as useful, because, being unable to deteriorate

\* *Memorabilia.* Liv. 5.



the manners, they serve, if not to amend, at least to soften them.

This is, I believe, the most rational view of the subject: at any rate it is that of Cicero, whose testimony cannot be suspected. Give the most austere philosopher, the most inflexible stoic, the most impudent cynic, the choice of living with men unpolished, ignorant and corrupt, or with men corrupt, polite, and well informed, and he will not hesitate a moment to take the latter. “I saw,” says the successor of the unfortunate Marion, “I saw him massacred by a people at once cruel and cowardly, treacherous and ungrateful; and who had received from him nothing but benefits. I have seen that reason without cultivation is but a mere instinct, more brutal and ferocious than that of beasts: I have found nothing in these men of nature but mischievous children, so much the more dangerous as they are usually stronger than the generality of the most robust Europeans. I have observed them in the space of a few minutes, pass from the most childish joy to the deepest grief; from tranquillity to fury, and from thence to the most immoderate laughter. I have seen them, alternately, and with no perceptible interval, gentle and fawning, then stern and

T                      threatening;

“ threatening ; never long in the same frame  
 “ of mind, but always dangerous, always trea-  
 “ cherous.” \*

After this digression, which is not altogether foreign to the subject, I think, Sir, you will not hesitate to agree with me, that it is almost impossible the young Creoles of either sex should receive in their paternal habitations, or even in France, an education which shall at once unite the advantages of the physical and moral—What can be done then to obviate the evil?—Something very simple; something which would have been done long since, if the least spark of public spirit had existed in the country.

Let there be founded in Saint Domingo itself, establishments for the education of the children of Saint Domingo.

The advantages of these kinds of establishments are so numerous and so decisive, that nothing but the most culpable indifference, united to the blindest ignorance, could have prevented the inhabitants from recognizing, many years ago, their indispensable necessity.

\* *Nouveau Voyage à la Mer du Sud.* Page 129.



## LETTER XXX.

Desert,  
May 1790.

IT is with the inhabitants of our colonies, Sir, as with the foldiers with whom Alexander over-ran Perfia; the conquerors have affumed the manners of the conquered. The colonifts have preferred the difgrace of adopting thofe of the flaves to the merit of giving them better. But an affertion of this nature will bring upon me a charge of calumny unlefs fubftantiated by facts.

In France, for example, the mafter of a houfe will look upon himfelf as insulted if you get his maid with child; here he will thank you, as for the beft piece of fervice you can do him: for this child becomes his property, and confequently adds fomething to his capital.

Should the feelings of a father operate fo strongly as to incline you to withdraw your fon from the flavery to which he is deftined by the Roman Law, *Partus fequitur ventrem*, he will fell him to you for fo much down upon the nail, but with the efpecial

T 2

precaution

precaution of regulating the price by the anxiety you shew to obtain him. If you do not buy him, his master will not fail to have him brought up to some occupation; by means of which he may be enabled to let him out, or sell him, or to put him in a condition of buying himself on some future day, that is, of paying the price of his liberty.

The girls are a more valuable commodity than the boys, because, exclusive of the trades they may be taught, if they have the smallest pretensions to beauty, they have no great need of abilities to excite, amongst the unmarried whites, an emulation which assures them a price impossible to ascertain, since it is love, and what is more, self-love, which determines it.—Rivals of the son of Alcmena! would you see the Genius of commerce cover the shores of Saint Domingo with altars to your name? Imitate, then, that labour of the hero's, which in one night gave the good old Danaus fifty grand-children!

The only thing that astonishes such as experience has apprised of the innumerable resources struck out by a certain kind of industry, is—that it has not yet entered into the head of some ingenious speculator to monopolize, under the name of *Etalon Banal*, Colonial Stallion, the fabrication of all the people of colour at so much a head. Perhaps they  
are



are afraid lest the Chamber of Commerce should take advantage of the luminous idea, and add to their other *exclusive privileges*, that of manufacturing the human race. I do not think their fears are altogether without foundation, for there would be no more injustice in preventing the colonists from begetting their own children, than in prohibiting them from refining their own sugar, or spinning their own cotton !

From what I have said, Sir, you must be fully convinced that what impoverishes the rich with you enriches the poor with us ; that lechery, which in France is at once a mortal sin, and a ruinous passion, is metamorphosed here into a source of lucrative speculations ; that one of the methods of acquiring a fortune at Saint Domingo, is to beget a number of bastards ; and, finally, that this branch of the public prosperity is founded on the very vice which saps the foundation of all society elsewhere—on the want of good morals !

There are to be found here, particularly in the port-towns, a number of whites, and free mulattoes who make a great deal of money, merely by letting out their male or female negroes. Avarice has even extended its power over the pleasures of love ; for just as a servant-maid in Europe asks her mistress's permission to walk out, so a negro woman  
here,

here, asks leave to go and sleep with such or such a white: and as she is obliged, in many houses, to pay her mistress a certain sum out of the produce of her nocturnal labours, you will conceive that the mistress, who, from a principle of decency, refuses such a permission, would expose herself to the weighty reproach of being a bad œconomist; since the negro servant-girls have nothing but what they gain by their *charms* to cover *them* from the public eye.—Thus modesty is indebted here for its veil to lasciviousness!

Let us, however, be just, Sir.—This vice cannot be looked upon as peculiar to the French colonies, nor as a consequence of the still-increasing depravity of our morals. More than a century ago, the traveller Dellon found the same practice completely established at the Bay of All Saints; “where,” says he, “even the women who pass for virtuous, make no scruple to trick out their slaves for the purpose of enabling them to set a higher price on the infamous pleasures in which they traffic.” \*

When avarice is the first principle of the depravity of morals, nothing but the intervention of the government and of religion can possibly set bounds to it; and when these two are arrived at such a

\* *Relation d'un Voyage aux Indes Orientales. Tome 2. Chap. 28.*



pitch of blindness as not to see that their existence is inseparably connected with the exertion of this prime duty, it is perfectly needless to look for the solution of the problem of a society without morals, any where but in Bareme. \*

That the Civil Administration, essentially charged with the police, should busy itself with every thing but the care of superintending the state of morality, ought to astonish no one. Governments have never known how to preserve a just medium between the indifference which suffers every thing to run to decay, and the inquisition which takes every thing into its own hands. "And yet," says the Abbé de Mably, "whatever our great philosophers may advance, all depends upon the morals; and the deeper you search into the operations of politics, the more you will be convinced of it." †

But that religion, or rather its ministers, should consent to share this reproach, is what could hardly have been expected, when we consider with what anxiety they have always watched, with what eagerness they have always seized, every opportunity of extending, with the influence of their ministry,

\* A celebrated Calculator.

† *De la Legislation, ou Principes des Lois.* Tome 1. Liv. 2. Chap. 4.

the power of which it is the result, and the degree of consequence attached to that power. †

The clergy of the colony seem to have voluntarily renounced the advantages which this system of conduct procures them elsewhere. Tranquil in their parsonage-houses, they spend in peace an income sufficiently large to enable them to live comfortably. Mass is celebrated one way or other, in churches where none go to hear it—so that to avoid the reproach of preaching in the desert they do not preach at all. Still less do they exert themselves to awaken, by private exhortations, the languishing, not to say the expiring zeal of their flocks.

I am persuaded, Sir, that there are to be found amongst them men of real merit: at the same time truth obliges me to avow they are not numerous; because the superior clergy, who nominate to the

† It is to this ambition, ill disguised, that we must attribute the disgraceful manner in which after a long toleration, the Jesuit missionaries were finally driven from China. We may see, in the second voyage of Father Gerbillon, with what insolence men who preached, and who, in effect, ought to have known, no other revenge than pardoning injuries, after receiving from the government every kind of satisfaction they could desire for a slight insult offered to one of them, still dared to demand of the emperor, who had overwhelmed them with kindness, the punishment of the municipal officers of Canton, even to the mandarin who was confessedly innocent.—But the monarch had the good sense to refuse them.

vacant



vacant benefices, have contracted the pernicious habit of sending none thither but such intriguing or suspicious characters as they wish to be rid of. The flambeau of faith, therefore, entrusted to such hands, can only shed a faint and doubtful light in regions which the South inflames with all its fires! To speak my mind freely on the subject, nothing, generally speaking, can be more irregular than the regular clergy of Saint Domingo, composed, in a great measure, of monks who have renounced their order. Never did the celebrated saying of Saint Paul, that "*Strength is made perfect in weakness,*" offer to true piety a more consolatory hope for the future! In the interim, the conjectures which public scandal delights to indulge on the children with which the female mulatto of Monsr. the Rector may have peopled the parsonage-house, keep their course; and as this increase of family is for his Reverence, as well as for the rest of the colonists, a sensible increase of fortune; you may easily comprehend, that in the interested age in which we live, few will have the candour to suppose he is indebted for them solely to the good will of his parishioners.

I do not know, however, if indifference, the force of habit, that of example, and above all, the power of opinion, which looks upon continence to be a virtue so painful, so foreign from the manners,

ners, and climate of Saint Domingo, that impotence itself disbelieves in it ; I do not know, I say, whether all this united, may not balance the effect of a scandal, (which one has always the resource of attributing to calumny) sufficiently so, at least, to enable the clergy to preserve some portion of the veneration of which they stand so much in need, by permitting us to suppose that the rest of their conduct corresponds to the dignity and importance of their holy profession. People are too much engaged here with their own affairs, to inquire minutely into what passes with others. Slander is the daughter of Idleness. One thing, however, no person can be ignorant of—that amongst the ministers of the God of Truth, men are to be found wicked enough to dispute the palm of cunning with the African jugglers, by persuading the credulous negro, that for a certain sum, which is always paid beforehand, they can enable him to recover the moveable he has lost, or the pullet which the rats have long since devoured.

There is no opinion, Sir, of a more deceitful and fatal nature than that which maintains the possibility of a society having a code of morality which shall supply the place of religion. It is the abuse of the latter joined to a spirit of independence, which has given birth to an error as novel as it is alarming. The most enlightened nations, the most perfect



fect societies, have from the beginning of time, and from one end of the world to the other, recognized the necessity of a mode of worship, supported by a symbol of faith, or creed, implicitly adopted. Sparta did not rely so intirely on the goodness of her laws, on the virtues of her citizens, but that she was still anxious to have the Gods for her protectors. The last act of the wisest of men was a religious one.—To believe is as necessary to us all, as it is natural ; but to reason well is the lot of few : and I know of no system of religion whose fundamental principles do not perfectly accord with universal morality, or the dearest interests of society. Fana- ticism, which has armed one form of worship against another ; intolerance, which has given birth to so many sects, never had, from the first, any other origin than pride or self-love, which have struggled to substitute their opinion for that of the legislator, and their particular interest for the general good of the whole.

It is then the duty of government to take care, on one side, that religion be maintained and re- spected ; and on the other, that it never become, in the hands of its ministers, a means of oppressing or misleading the people. Every legislator who permits the public morals to be in open contra- diction with the principles of religion, infallibly destroys both the one and the other, and with them  
himself.

himself. But how much more dangerous must this depravation of morals be, when the clergy themselves are tainted with it ! It is then that the multitude passes, without any intermediate step, from contempt of the ministers to that of the worship ; and from contempt of the worship to that of the laws. Every scandalous priest is a conspirator.— It is true, that an apostolic vicar is sometimes (though very rarely) sent to inspect the conduct of ministers : but this inspector may be a very worthy and ingenious man, and yet his authority, which does not extend beyond the period of his mission, be insufficient to remedy the original defect, which I conceive to be the want of proper care in the choice of the colonial clergy.

With respect to religious institutions, it is not enough, Sir, that the principles be good, and the dogmas pure : he who labours to propagate them, must also shew, in his own person, an example of the strictest conformity to them : for people in general believe no more in the doctrines of those who affect, themselves, to disregard them, than in the virtues which are preached by men tainted with every vice. As long as I shall see the *fisherman's ring* on the finger of a sovereign prince, and the bald front of the *Servant of the Servants of God*,



*God*, decorated with a triple crown\*, it will be difficult to convince me that humility is a quality necessary to salvation.

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LETTER XXXI.

*Desert,  
June 1790.*

YOUR last paquet, Sir, inclosing the minister's letter for *Monf. de Marbois*, was just put into my hands, when I learned that, having received information that an exasperated mob was hastening from *Cape François* to *Port-au-Prince*, for the express purpose of seizing his person, he had judged it prudent to withdraw himself, and accordingly embarked with his family for France. †

His

\* It was *John XXII.* who first assumed the *Tiara*, or triple crown, in virtue of his being *Dominator cœlestium, terrestrium, et infernorum.*

† The conduct of this *Monf. Barbé de Marbois* affords a singular instance of the versatility of the human mind. Execrated in the colony which he administered, for his servile attachment to what

His opposition to the beneficent views of Monsf. du Chillau, by compelling that governor to return to Paris, for the defence of a cause supposed to be inseparably connected with the public prosperity, had long since raised a general indignation against him. I am very much afraid that the consequences of this misunderstanding between the two Administrators will be extremely prejudicial to the country. Monsf. Du Chillau, perhaps, has been a little too precipitate; since it is universally agreed that if he had chosen to avail himself of the confidence he had inspired, he might have forced his competitor to retire; and there can be no doubt but that in the present state of things, the salvation of the colony imperiously requires the whole power to be concentrated in the hands of a man, who to the advantage of being already possessed of

what is called, and frequently with too much justice, ministerial despotism; hated to such a degree as to provoke, at this early period, a kind of insurrection, of which he was the sole object; this same Monsf. de Marbois has a seat at present in the Council of Five Hundred, that is to say, in the midst of the assassins of a citizen king, if there ever existed one who deserved that title; and in whose name he governed in a most despotic manner, while his brother-in-law, Kellerman, commanded the armies of the Republic. Citizen Barbé must surely be endowed with a very extraordinary degree of patriotism, since he finds no repugnance in sitting amongst the murderers of a prince who was certainly his benefactor, in naming him to a situation which gave him fortune, power, and consequence; and whom, on that account, if on no other, he certainly must allow to be a just and wise appreciator of merit.

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the general esteem, joins a firmness of character which would inevitably have made him master of the public opinion.

If France wishes then to prevent the calamities with which Saint Domingo is menaced, let her hasten to re-establish the unity of power and of will on which its salvation depends, by restoring Mons. Du Chillau to the prayers of the colony. In the present circumstances, wherever the wrong may be, the right is evidently with him who can save the country.—With respect to myself, who am apprehensive that the contrary opinion will prevail, I am preparing to quit, at least for a time, a country whose inhabitants already divided in their sentiments, and deprived of the tutelary authority, around which they might have rallied, are on the point of becoming alternately the authors and the victims of an anarchy, which threatens them with universal, and inevitable destruction.

Already an assassination, rendered more atrocious by the regularity with which it was conducted \*, has given the colony a specimen of that sanguinary enthusiasm which marked the first steps of the French Revolution.——Have you conceived then,

\* M. Ferrand de Baudières, seneschal of Petit-Goave, tried, condemned, and executed by an assembly as tumultuous as it was illegal.

Gentlemen,

Gentlemen, the horrible design of verifying by your own experience, whether it be not possible to attain by crimes, what has hitherto been looked upon as solely to be acquired by virtues? I will venture to predict to you, that it is not; and that the Phantom, adorned with the attributes, and covered with the mask of Equality, which with a poignard in its hand, shews you the Temple of Liberty beyond that river of blood, through which it incites you to wade, is nothing but DESPOTISM IN DISGUISE.

I hope, and would fain believe, Sir, that efficacious measures are already taking for repressing the excess of this first movement of effervescence. It is not, certainly, by attacking in their principle, the laws of justice and humanity, the basis of every social contract, that you can expect to succeed in fixing the rights of the man, and the citizen. "Our nation," said Voltaire, "is frivolous, but cruel." Strive to convict the Lord of Ferney of a double falsehood, by proving to Europe, which has her eyes attentively fixed upon you, that the French nation, *frivolous* while she was not permitted to be any thing else, and *cruel* while the ambition of her chiefs precipitated her into all the excesses of civil discord, can display a very different character when

\* *Oeuvres Complètes.* Tome 60. Lettre 119.



there is no longer a question of deciding between the choice of factions, but of calmly deliberating on the laws from which her future happiness and liberty are to be derived. Now, now is the moment to call to recollection that exquisite thought of the profound Montesquieu, “ In the times of  
 “ ignorance legislators commit the greatest evils  
 “ without scruple ; but in an enlightened age they  
 “ even tremble while conferring the greatest blessings.” \*

Enough, Sir, and more than enough, for a man who speaks, at such a distance, to people who do not appear over and above attentive to the voice of reason : and it is this consideration, I frankly confess, which has more than any other, determined me to retire to North America. Believe me,—tranquilly seated on the shore, to which you are endeavouring to steer the vessel, whose management embarrasses as much as it fatigues you, and where you hope to find a safe retreat from the storm that is blackening around you ; I see distinctly all the perils, the rocks and quicksands, which threaten your approach, and which do not seem to have attracted your notice.

If nothing happens to prevent me, I shall set out towards the end of the ensuing month, or, at latest,

\* *De L'Esprit des Lois.* Tome 1. Preface.

in the beginning of August. And where could I find a spot better adapted to observe, and to judge of your Revolution, than the country, which, after having so prudently effected its own, and afforded you, in some respects, a proper model to follow, has been the school of several men, whose names I see with unaffected pleasure in the list of your legislators; because I hope the experience of things will supply, with regard to them, that of age and reflection—if, after all, such a thing be possible.

The little time I have to remain here will render my future observations more fugitive and desultory than usual. We do not dwell with much interest on what we are about to quit for ever. I confess that my letters are little more, properly speaking, than notes on Saint Domingo; but, I must be allowed to say, at the same time, that this was all I promised.

Let us throw, then, a passing glance on the physical, which, with a more systematic observer, would have preceded the moral, education.

There is much more good to be said of the one than the other. As the women are brought to bed here with infinitely more facility than elsewhere, the children have, even in this, no inconsiderable advantage; since they are not liable to be injured  
by



by difficult labours, nor by the unskilfulness of the midwife.

From the mother they pass immediately into the arms of the nurse, who places them on a large mat in the middle of the room. There, naked from head to foot, and bathed twice a day in cold, or at most, lukewarm water, a simple clout to dry them, composes the whole stock of their swaddling-clothes—so justly proscribed by Buffon\* and Rousseau.†

It was in this equipage that I found the little Paulina at my arrival. She was then only two months old, and had already begun to creep about upon her mat. At four months she could stand upright; at six she ran, fell, and got up again, without any one's being alarmed at her falls, or attempting to assist her. The only inconvenience attending this natural mode of education is the difficulty of habituating children to clothe themselves. Much time was required to accustom Paulina to wear shoes. Her first employ when she wakes in a morning, is to take off the chemise which was put on her in the evening; as one of her greatest pleasures is to run about naked in the rain: and

\* *Histoire Naturelle*. Tome 4.

† *Emile, ou de L'Education*. Tome 1.

this is a pleasure in which she is constantly indulged ; for experience has shewn that these kind of baths are extremely salutary. Thus Paulina is as strong and as well formed, at two years old, as the best constitutioned children with you are at five ; without ever having experienced, even at the critical period of dentition, any of those evils which torment our infancy in Europe. She will astonish me in no trifling degree, if I should ever see her, delicate and vapourish, teaze, and put to the proof, even the tenderness of her lover, by the capricious sensibility of her nerves.

Let us not, however, Sir, conclude from what has been said, that this kind of physical education is proper for all countries. Some regard must be paid to the climate, and to the variations of temperature, which mark in a degree more or less sensible, the difference of the seasons ; as well as to the habitudes, regimen, customs, and wants which await the children in the life to which they are destined. Thus there would be as much imprudence in not cloathing them at all in Europe, as there is in cloathing them too much ; in bathing them without distinction in all seasons, as in never bathing them at all, &c.

There exists an abuse, however, at Saint Domingo, which the negro women have introduced, and  
the



the Creoles too generally adopted: instead of carrying the children as we do, they carry them astride on their haunches \*. This is certainly much more convenient for the mother or the nurse, who preserving by this means the free use of one of her arms, may walk, nay run without being incommoded by her burden: but still the advantages of this method are balanced by the inconvenience of swelling the bellies, and deforming the thighs of the children—I can attribute to nothing but this, the bending of the tibia, and the want of proportion observable in the slim legs of the greater part of the negroes.

It must appear somewhat extraordinary to you that children are not baptized here at their birth. The ceremony is sometimes deferred for ten years; and the clergy make no opposition to this sort of anabaptism. This delay, however, must not be looked upon in an heretical point of view; being at bottom little more than an affair of calculation. The business is to find a god-father, rich, and unmarried, who, while he renounces in the name of his adopted god-son, “ *the devil and all his works;* ” “ *the pomps and vanities of this wicked world,* ” may leave him his estate, and make a handsome present

\* This custom is universal in Africa: it prevails also at the Moluccas. *Histoire Generale des Voyages.* Tome 4. Chap. 8.

to Monsieur the Rector, who thus loses nothing by waiting.

If we put off here, Sir, to the epoch when innocence begins to blush at its nakedness, the precaution of giving a veil to the modesty of the daughters ; that of the mothers has merely what is necessary to conceal the nudity, without hiding the shape, of their limbs. A single petticoat and a loose gown of the finest muslin compose their usual dress—there is no occasion for a long and narrow examination to distinguish across the faint carnation tinge which floats along this airy vesture, the impostures of art from the real treasures of nature ! When circumstances require them to be dressed with more care, they add a coloured under-petticoat, and a corset : if there be any who have the folly of attempting to set themselves out with more parade, so much the worse for them—they are certainly not the most handsome ; and the art which deprives beauty of some of its charms, can never embellish ugliness. With respect to the face, that must be left at all events as it came out of the hands of nature ; for however skilfully the paint may be applied, we should see in a few minutes the charms of the prettiest made-up face melt away with the ceruse, and the carmine that composed it.

A female



A female Creole, who has never been out of Saint Domingo, would be a creature of a particular species, were it not for the conformity which an education, similar in almost every instance, establishes between her and the female mulatto. Let this, however, be a secret between us: for you will easily comprehend that with the prejudices which exist here, such a comparison must be an inexpressible crime in the eyes of those whose dignity it compromises.

I have no intention to speak of their morals, yet I cannot help observing that the female Creoles have so much the more merit in living chaste, as the example of the males, and the education they receive, leave them absolutely without resource against the influence of the climate, and the dangers of an eternal idleness. They pass their lives either stretched at length, or *chinta*, that is, sitting in the oriental manner on mats, where their supreme delight is to have the soles of their feet tickled by a female slave. With the exception of a little cookery, they never employ themselves in the occupations of their sex: for in all parts of the world, where labour is the lot of the slave, idleness is necessarily an essential prerogative of the master. The only art in which they excel, the only one in which, I am told, their diligence equals their knowledge, is the art which constitutes not the least indiffer-

different part of the *Ars Amandi* of Ovid or of Bernard.

I should have no great difficulty, Sir, to prove to you that idleness, and above all, a sedentary life, contribute, in an extraordinary degree, to strengthen the voluptuous passions, which depend less on climate than is generally supposed; if the discussion did not threaten to lead me into details, which might approach a little too near to the experimental philosophy of Doctor Pangloss. I shall content myself, then, with one remark; and to secure myself from all reproach, give it in the words of a grave and scientific traveller.

“ The observations which I have made in  
 “ Russia,” says the Abbé Chappe d’Auteroche,  
 “ are in direct opposition to the opinion that the  
 “ constitution is less active in the northern than  
 “ the southern climates. The Russians must be  
 “ excepted from the general law; and I think I  
 “ can find in moral causes the solution of this ap-  
 “ parent contradiction. The women being aban-  
 “ doned to themselves, and to indolence, the most  
 “ trifling passions are naturally productive of  
 “ striking effects.” \*—But is there not a singular  
 want of justice, Sir, in attributing, in almost every

\* *Voyage en Sibérie.* Tome 2.



observation of this nature, to the women alone the defective morals of such or such country? As if the aggressor, in every kind of combat, ought not to be considered as the first author of the defeat of the vanquished!

One remark which I am sorry to be under the necessity of making, is, that the slaves are much more harshly treated by the women than the men. This disgusting contrast of cruelty with weakness, is a fresh proof that the latter has always been the essential characteristic of despotism; as the abuse of power will always be the necessary consequence of its usurpation. The trembling hand of impotence grasps with increasing violence the sceptre, which it is in momentary danger of losing.

LET-

## LETTER XXXII.

Desert,  
June 1790.

I HAVE not forgot, Sir, that in the conversations which immediately preceded my departure for Saint Domingo, you frequently conjured me to be upon my guard against an error, common to the greater part of my brethren, and not to confound the happiness of the inhabitants with the riches of a country—And, in effect, what is richer than Potosi? who more miserable than those who inhabit it? I do not believe the observation was thrown out at random by the traveller who took notice, that “those who shewed the gold mines to Monsieur de la Condamine were without shoes or stockings.”\*

The erroneous sentiment which measures the happiness of a state by its power, is connected with the opinion, no less false, which judges of its strength by its extent. Let us be well persuaded that it is with societies as with individuals; and that the greater part of the evils which afflict, and

\* *Voyage en Italie par L'Abbé Coyer.*



of the vices which corrupt them, spring from the same source as their opulence and their power : we may then conclude that the just medium between poverty and riches is, for the happiness of societies, what moderate desires are for that of individuals.

If the felicity of the colonists of Saint Domingo depended on the contingent which they pour into the balance of the riches of the state, they would be, without contradiction, the most enviable of human beings : but as nothing exempts them from the general law which proportions their privations to their enjoyments ; and as the evils which they suffer are the necessary consequences of their means of prosperity, it inevitably follows that their happiness must be always in inverse ratio to their wealth.

It is not that the colonists do not enjoy many advantages unknown to the people of Europe. The equality which necessarily prevails in a country where the fullness of honour consists in becoming a planter, establishes a sort of independence, inadmissible in every country where ambition and vanity open a career to the passions which spring from pride, alternately humbled and triumphant ! Free from a part of the fetters which make the exercise of what is called good-breeding a very painful employment, the colonist who is content to stay at home,

home, enjoys there a degree of liberty and of power which sovereigns themselves might envy ; since he is not, like them, subjected to the influence of opinion. If he ruins himself, it most assuredly is not for having sacrificed to the laws of appearances, which no one obliges him to maintain—and nothing but an excess of vanity, or of folly, can possibly induce him to swell his expences beyond his means ; since his neighbours are as well acquainted with his affairs as himself.

After all, however moderate his fortune may be, the climate is still favourable to it by producing a two-fold saving—in reducing to a mere trifle the expence of cloathing, and to nothing at all, that, which of all the various articles of the first necessity is the most cruelly felt by the poor, I mean firing.

And even supposing, Sir, what very rarely happens, that the profits of a plantation do not enable a planter to purchase the three articles of animal life which are here the most expensive, salt-meat, bread, and wine ; he may supply the want of the first by poultry, which costs him nothing to keep ; of the second by bananas, and of the third by tafiat \*, a liquor distilled from molasses, which drank

\* An inferior sort of rum.



pure, but with moderation, or tempered with water, is no unwholesome beverage.

But by how many inconveniences are not these advantages balanced ! What an infinity of privations in that single one of all society ! What repugnances to subdue, what disgusts to overcome, for him who cannot, without putting his fortune to the hazard, dispense with being at one and the same time, (though sick and weak himself) the overseer, driver, apothecary and nurse of his negroes ; in a word, the slave of his slaves ! How many planters are there, who have lost in a few hours the fruits of a long series of laborious solitudes ! I have just seen one of these unfortunate men—After having sacrificed twenty of the best years of his life in establishing a coffee plantation, which was managed by forty negroes, he saw himself on the point of realizing, by the profits of his crop, and the sale of his slaves, a capital of two hundred thousand livres, with which he proposed returning to his native country ; when on the eve of the very day he had fixed for gathering in the berries, his black driver poisoned seven and thirty of the negroes, and thus reduced him to the sad necessity of beginning the world again—for not only the berries, but the plants themselves, will become the immediate prey of the liane ; which unless kept perpetually under by the hoe, over-runs and suffocates them.

Every

Every thing, Sir, every thing—the future itself, contributes here to embitter the present. The inhabitants execrate even the monotonous beauty of the sky, of which the constant serenity appears, perhaps, to you, a benefit, but which is in reality little more than a lasting source of ennui. Nothing ever proved to me so completely, that nine-tenths of our poets were a set of ignorant and insipid drivellers, than the enthusiasm with which these blockheads celebrate the charms of their “ eternal “ spring.” Tell them from me, Sir, that ennui begins where hope ends; and that the spring owes half its beauties to the rigour of winter. Tell them that as the very feebleness which suspends the use of one part of our powers, adds to the sentiment of our existence, so the sweetest of our pleasures are those which are bought by privations and pains. Tell them that I have no difficulty in conceiving how the Jews, satiated with celestial manna, might sometimes regret the flesh-pots of Egypt: and, finally, put them in mind that eternity and its delights are only calculated for immortality.

Affuredly there is no where to be found a soil so fertile in insects as that of Saint Domingo. You would say that every sun-beam, every drop of rain, produced them by thousands. 'Tis a pest against which there is no preservative. Every traveller is full of the ravages of those innumerable bodies of  
ants,



ants, which, not content with laying waste the gardens, enter the casars in such multitudes, that the inhabitants have been obliged to construct drawers with legs to them, where they secure their provisions, by placing them in little troughs filled with water. Nothing is safe from their active voracity; my ink itself becomes their prey, if I forget for an instant to shut my writing-desk. I have seen them attack, subdue, and devour the most venomous insects, such as the red-tailed spider, the scorpion, the mille-pedes, &c. \*

There is frequently found in the houses a lizard of a light green, streaked with rose-coloured rings, which has procured it the pleasing name of *Lizard-anoli*. This beautiful little animal is become very familiar, from the kindness with which it is treated, and which it does not owe to its beauty alone—since it is really a useful guest, being a great destroyer of insects.

\* At the Isle de France, they have naturalised a bird named the *Martin*, a native of the Indies, which frees the cattle from the vermin that torment them. Why should not the inhabitants of Saint Domingo equally endeavour to naturalize amongst them, the natural enemies of the ant, such as the *formicaleo*, which, multiplied to a certain degree, might succeed, if not in exterminating, yet certainly in diminishing the species considerably, in the vicinity of the settlements.

One of the daughters of Minyas has also arrived here to establish the villainous brood of bats. I would fain believe that Jupiter has sent us the ugliest and most impious of the family. The species, as far as I have been able to judge, does not differ from our own.

It is not so with the shining fly, which they call here *coucouie*, from the Spanish *cucuios*, or *cuyeros*: it belongs to the species of *scarabæus*, and is distinguished from ours not only by its size, which is nearly that of the May-bug, but by the light which it emits from its eyes. I have verified the observation that it is possible to read by the lustre they shed around them when placed, in any number, under a glass.

Of all the beasts, brute and human, which have been transported to the colonies, none have succeeded better than the asses. Always domestic, despised, and sober, if their transplantation has added nothing to their intellectual faculties, it has certainly taken nothing from their physical ones. I know only the ass and man who enjoy the privilege of living, without degenerating, under every latitude. The only difference I can perceive is, that the asses of this country, improved probably in modesty, do not bray so frequently as those of yours.

Amongst



Amongst the productions of the animal kingdom, that which we may be now and then allowed to be a little offended with nature for producing, is the insect called here *Chique*, at Peru, *Pique*, and at Mexico, the Isthmus of Panama, and Brazil, *Nigua*. It is the same, I believe, which in Virginia and the Carolinas is known by the name of the feed-tick \*. This creature makes a more direct attack on man than the ant, which aims only at his subsistence, or the worm, which is content with his carcase : it devours him alive.

Imperceptible every where but in the skin where it lodges, the chique eats through the leather, or the seams of your shoes, to establish itself in its favourite position under the toe-nail. Here it announces itself by a most violent itching ; and if it be not immediately extirpated, or if, in your haste, you break the pellicle which forms the sack that contains its eggs, you must not hope to get rid of it without seeing the foot reduced to a state of supuration.

The longer the chique, which is only distinguishable as a little black speck, remains in the flesh, the deeper it penetrates. It multiplies there

\* See *Le Journal d'un Voyage dans l'Interieure de L'Amérique Septentrionale*. Tome 2. Lettre 65.

so rapidly, that if it were left undisturbed, the progeny of this little black speck alone, would devour, in a given time, the strongest man on earth. Father Labat relates that a Capuchin, being desirous of conveying a chique to the European naturalists, had the resolution to preserve it till the moment that it became absolutely necessary to cut off his leg, to stop the progress of a mortification\*. You will agree with me, Sir, that this was devoting himself with a vengeance to the cause of Natural History! In vain do you hope to preserve yourself from their attacks, by keeping your casa perfectly neat and clean; for if you have no chiques at home, you bring them from other people, or other people bring them to you. The only precaution you can take is to have your flesh pinked, or flashed, the instant the itching begins to be troublesome, or even before, if you have leisure. The negro women, who are usually employed on these occasions, acquit themselves very adroitly, with no other instrument than the point of a needle.

\* *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles Françaises de L'Amérique.* Tome 1.  
Chap. 6.



## LETTER XXXIII.

*Desert, July 1790.*

YES, Sir, man is, was, and always will be an enigma, as difficult to be solved by himself as by others. It is hardly a month since, that nothing but the hope of quitting this country could have rendered it supportable to me ; and now, that this hope is changed into certainty, I know not what involuntary gloom oppresses my mind at the thought that I am on the eve of leaving for ever a spot, which I wish I had never seen, which I have execrated a thousand times, and to which I would not willingly send even an enemy—But do not, rich and unhappy country ! usurp a tribute of sensibility which is not due to thee. It is not thou, it is you, ye toils, which relieved me so often from the weight of ennui ; and thou, earth, whose aridity I chased away ; it is you, ye days of uniformity and peace ; ye hours of solitude and melancholy musing, which I regret ! Alas ! those trees which my hand has planted, which my care has fostered, and of which my eye has anxiously watched the increase ; those paths traced with so much pain ; those rivulets, those flowers, that ver-

dure—all, all will disappear. As a torrent swelled with sudden rains sweeps away every trace of the culture which so lately embellished its banks, so will a few short months obliterate every vestige of the innocent art which controuled nature, without violating, which adorned without disguising her!

My departure for the United States of America is fixed for the ensuing month. La Condamine says he recovered amongst savages from the fatigues of living with men; and I am going to recover amongst men from the fatigues of living with slaves.

If I may trust the reports of travellers, my removal to Pensylvania will give me a foretaste of what he experiences who passes from the flames of purgatory to the joys of Paradise. The nearer the moment approaches, the more anxious I feel to see at length a country which they have termed the *chef-lieu of humanity* \*. I accept the omen—but two year's residence in the pretended land of promise which I am about to quit, has so much weakened my confidence in the reports of these gentlemen, that with respect to unknown countries, I shall trust to nothing in future but my own experience. I have always blamed the want of faith in

\* *Histoire de l'Asie, de L'Afrique, et de L'Amérique.* Tome 13.



the disciple who insisted on touching, before he would believe in the Master who had never deceived him. I, who have been deceived so often, am not so hard of belief; I only ask to see—till then, I reduce, before hand, to their just value, that is, to something less than one half, the marvels we have been told of this extraordinary country. Besides, Sir, “novelty,” as the author of the *Théorie des Sentimens agréables* \* well observes, “has “no longer the same charms for the old; they “have learned to distrust its promises;” and if I am not old in years, I am at least in experience.

If you have ever known the conflict of two such opposite passions as grief and joy, both flowing from the same source, you will comprehend the present state of my mind: yes, Sir, my happiness distresses me exceedingly, when I reflect that it may distress those who cannot possibly partake it! One must be on the eve of breaking the tender ties of habitude to feel all its power. Do not, however, confound with the pretensions of self-love, the avowal of an attachment increased by every thing which a perfect uniformity of existence can add to a no less perfect uniformity of sentiments. Let the coxcomb who prides himself on the privations with which his retreat menaces society, be-

\* Chapter 4.

come,

come, and justly, the object of derision ; but let not me, on that account, be prohibited from finding in the grief of those, from whom fortune is about to tear me, a counterpoise to the sentiment of my happiness. Since my departure has been irrevocably determined, every day brings up the question so often debated—Who is the most to be pitied, he who retires, or he who stays ? The decision of this melancholy controversy is always the same—namely, that, if the one carries with him those indelible regrets and remembrances, which, wherever he goes, compel him to look upon himself as a stranger, a forlorn and insulated being ; while the other sees in every object around him, a monument, that while it wakens his recollection, serves only to embitter his loss ; death, which precipitates into the same tomb two friends, levelled by the same blow, is infinitely preferable to such a separation.

It is at present with me, Sir, as with him, who, on the point of dying, regrets he has not made a better use of life. I reproach myself for my negligence in not entering into a variety of details, which might have served to give you a more complete knowledge of the colony.

Although the judgment which one forms of a country, from a residence in the great towns, and from the manners of those who inhabit them, is almost



almost always erroneous; it was nevertheless a part of my plan to terminate with Cape François, and the districts in its neighbourhood, my observations on Saint Domingo: but the proximity of Port-au-Prince, and the certainty of finding there a vessel which would sail in the beginning of August, joined to the difficulty of travelling, increased by the unfavourable circumstance of a revolution ready to burst forth, have decided otherwise; and I shall set out without having seen the finest city, and the most beautiful part of the island. It will be no very great misfortune if I may venture to judge of the unknown by the known.

Cape François is built of stone; because its territory is the only one that has hitherto been free from earthquakes. I have been told that there is just as much difference between the style and manners of this town, and the others, as there is in their architecture; that is to say, the mental qualities of the former are to those of the latter, what a house is to a paltry hut. I can believe that local or accidental causes may produce some sensible difference in the customs, or in the style of society, without effecting on that account, any essential change in the manners, or in the mass of ideas, of which the character is always imperiously decided by the subsisting order of things. Thus, however old that order may be, I have not the least doubt  
but

but talents and virtues may be found here, just as candour and modesty may at the court of a good prince, without courts being, for those exceptions, less generally or less justly reputed the abodes of duplicity, and pride.

If the kind of life which the colonists lead preserves them from the little shuffling, intriguing passions, the vain and paltry squabbles of our European coteries, this advantage is more than balanced by the total privation of that kind of wit which constitutes urbanity, wherever the ambition of succeeding necessitates an attempt to please. Every man who can acquire a fortune without the assistance of his neighbour, inevitably loses a part of his social qualities ; and such is at this moment, the inhabitant of the colonies. Less insulated by the woods which surround him, than by his interest, his first ambition is to acquire a fortune, his second to acquire it in the speediest manner ; that he may be enabled to quit as soon as possible, a country where gold but very imperfectly gratifies the demands of vanity ; and where avarice makes but few sacrifices to self-love.

It is, then, extremely natural that men, always ready to return, should receive with little anxiety such as arrive, and that they should feel still less anxious to establish, even amongst themselves, any  
connection



connection more intimate than that which exists among travellers who are speedily to separate for ever. It is true, that success rarely justifies the hopes which the mind forms with so much the more avidity, as nothing diverts it from that sole object of its attention. But what of that! Experience can do nothing against an opinion once received. It is so well established, in the mother country especially, that nothing more is necessary to become a Croesus than to breathe the air of the colonies; that without embarrassing themselves with the fates of those who die in misery, it is sufficient for them to see from time to time, some one return, who, particularly favoured by circumstances, has acquired a fortune; to give this prejudice all the consistency of a mathematical demonstration.—A *West Indian* and a *Millionaire* will be long synonymous in France.

Ready to renounce, after an experience of two years, expectations which every hour proves to be more and more illusory, I am determined not to add to the number of impostors, who with a pernicious levity, or a most culpable dissimulation, take advantage of the credulity of ignorance to propagate an error which has already ruined thousands. Know then, Sir, once for all, that the time of rapid fortunes is to the history of Saint Domingo, what the ages when simple knights conquered kingdoms,

kingdoms, are to the annals of France\*: that if the soil of the colonies, like mines newly discovered, enriched the first who cultivated it, that soil, after attaining the maximum of its value, loses every day something of its fertility†: and that the proportion between its produce, and the expence of cultivating it, becoming, as I have proved, momentarily more disadvantageous to the cultivator, the epoch cannot be far distant, when he will see the fruits of his labour scarcely suffice for his subsistence. Calculate, now, the privations of every kind, the commercial vicissitudes, the perpetual apprehensions, the disgusting details, inseparable from the nature of slavery; the state of languor or anxiety in which he vegetates between a burning sky, and a soil always ready to swallow him up, and you will allow with me, that there is

\* Such as Gui de Lusignan, king of Jerusalem; Tancred de Tancarville king of Sicily; Jean de Brienne, emperor of the east, &c.

† We must not compare the lands of the colonies with those of Europe; the principle of vegetation in the latter being constantly renewed by manure, which the others never receive. Every kind of soil suffices for its natural productions, when these productions of themselves supply vegetation with a part of what they absorb; such as the leaves of trees, mosses, dead wood, the dung of animals, &c. but there is no soil, however fertile, which will not be exhausted, especially if it be compelled to bear what is foreign to it, without it be from time to time heartened with manure. That of Saint Domingo rarely resists more than twenty, or five and twenty years of cultivation.



no peasant, no day-labourer in Europe, whose condition is not preferable to that of a planter of Saint Domingo. La Fontaine somewhere says

“Aucun chemin de fleurs ne conduit à la gloire.”

Precisely the same thing, Sir, may be said of riches.

Do not suffer yourself to be imposed on by the puerile and ridiculous pomp which certain planters display in their transient residence at Paris, or in the maritime towns. I am in the secret of these quacks. This coach in which his West Indian Worship so awkwardly parades, that wardrobe of the Marquis de Mascarille, these jewels which sparkle on his tawny fingers, are the profits of many crops, and the price of no small number of his slaves. Yet a little while, and hard necessity will send the clownish niggard back, half civilized, and wholly stripped, like the daw in the fable, of his borrowed plumes, to begin again, with an aching heart, those labours which scarce produced in ten years, as much as he has spent in ten months, with no other advantage than having raised a laugh at his expence, from the Chevaliers d'Industrie, who stripped him of his wealth, and the prostitutes who shared with them in the spoils.

I never met a West Indian in France who did not enumerate to me, with more emphasis than accuracy,

racy, the charms of a residence at Saint Domingo : since I have been here, I have not found a single one who has not cursed both Saint Domingo, and the obstacles, eternally reviving, which, from one year to another, prolong his stay in this abode of the damned.

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LETTER XXXIV.

*Desert,*  
*July 1790.*

I HAVE perceived, Sir, what in fact you must have perceived yourself, that in my observations on this country, I have omitted a very material circumstance.

You know the kind of life led by the colonists, their modes of cultivation, their means of acquiring a fortune, &c. but you have hitherto found little or nothing in my letters to enable you to form an idea of the way in which New Establishments are set on foot. In the natural order of things, this should have preceded every other species of information :



ation : but my anxiety to give you none but just ideas on the subject induced me to defer it, until time and personal experience had made me intimately acquainted with all the details of this first, and most important operation.

In consequence of the inevitable inequality with which the goods of this world are distributed, we must begin with supposing the new colonist placed between the two extremes of riches and poverty ; that is, in a condition to enter upon the business with his own resources.

His first disbursement, which I estimate at four thousand livres, will be the charges of the concession, and the setting it out : and his first employ, to examine, in company with the surveyor, the situation, &c. of the ground—after being well assured that it was never conceded before (which has sometimes been found to be the case) or if it was, that it has been legally reunited to the domain. He will then mark out the boundaries distinctly, and cause an exact plan to be made of it, that he may avoid all discussions with his neighbours.

It was formerly the custom for these same neighbours to lend the new comer a few slaves, to assist in cutting down the trees which occupied the spot destined for the site of his dwelling house, and  
clearing

clearing a quantity of ground sufficient for planting a few bananas, &c. for the immediate support of his negroes : but I would not advise him to found any mighty hopes at present on this resource. It was at first but a virtue of circumstance.

If his means allow of it, the wisest step the young planter can take will be either to buy a few negroes, already accustomed to the breaking up of new ground, called here *batchet negroes*, and who may serve to instruct the rest ; or to hire a vacant gang ; that is, a set of slaves let out by their master, after he has disposed of all his immoveable property, for a limited time. If he does not adopt one of these resources, he must repair to the sea-ports, and buy of the first slave-ship which puts in, the requisite number of hands, which I should fix at ten, and which, with the necessary expences of his journey, the purchase of working tools, and provisions, the charges of carriage, &c. will stand him in near ten thousand livres, supposing that he buys picked negroes, and pays according to the prevailing custom, only a third in ready money.

Necessity sometimes obliges the poorer planters to purchase, at a much lower price, what is called the fag-end of the cargo, or refuse negroes : but of all the disadvantageous bargains which a want of money



money sometimes induces people to make, this is one of the most ruinous.

At all adventures, however, the new colonist cannot do better than apply his cares, in the first place, to lodge both himself and his negroes, to break up as soon as possible, the ground allotted for bananas, manioc, patates, ignamas, &c. provide a poultry yard, cattle of various kinds ; and, until he can subsist on the produce of these different objects, furnish himself with salt-meat, biscuit, &c.—I do not believe all this can be done under four thousand livres.

A spirit of order is less common than is usually imagined ; it is, however, extremely necessary to attend to it in beginning an establishment. To say nothing of the loss of time, therefore, occasioned by ill-directed labours, I look on it as a precaution indispensably necessary to place the dwelling-house as near the water as possible, in an airy situation, and in the centre of the concession ; from thence every operation should diverge, that the works may extend along the circumference, as the means of cultivation increase ; and, above all, that the time absorbed by long routs may be economized.

I ought to observe, Sir, that the mode I have just recommended is not applicable to a sugar plantation,

ation, which requires very different measures, and capitals much more considerable ; and which cannot, in fact, be entered upon but by a rich man, desirous to become still more so.

Almost all new planters clear more ground than they can cultivate at first ; this is attended with the two-fold inconvenience of depriving the ground of a part of the principles of its fecundity, and of wasting the time which might be much more profitably employed. I have more than once regretted that this country has not produced a single planter sufficiently informed to write a tract on agriculture ; such a work, if properly executed, would be an inestimable treasure for the new colonist. If I have not a wrong idea of the duties which the public good imposes upon government, I cannot avoid thinking it its peculiar province to command, and pay for, the writing of such an elementary treatise.

It is generally supposed, and I believe with reason, that the custom of setting fire to the wood which has been felled, is the best that could have been adopted ; since the ashes serve for manure to the chill and humid soil of these ancient forests. Happily, Sir, in this instance, the advantage of the planter, and invincible necessity accord—for by what other agent than fire could he possibly clear  
away



away those immense falls? I only wish he would proceed to the operation with a little more forethought; for then, as I have already observed, he might select a certain quantity of the more precious woods, and above all, not burn, as he does now, sixty acres of forest, for the sake of clearing ten acres of ground! There is scarce a man in easy circumstances either in England or Holland, whose furniture is not made of mahogany; while in France it is a kind of curiosity, rarely to be seen but in the boudoirs of the pretty creatures of both sexes. Hence it is but reasonable to conclude that our industry still bears the impression of that puerile character which is much more engaged with the caprices of vanity, than the wants of the multitude; while it neglects an infinite number of resources from which our commercial neighbours draw individual as well as general advantage.

Coffee is at present the commodity which the majority of the colonists principally attach themselves to raise. Those who do not set out with a capital sufficient to enable them to wait three years, till the produce of a coffee-walk may enable them to extend their labours, and free themselves from a part of the engagements they have contracted, will do well to join the cultivation of cotton to that of coffee; but let them carefully avoid the common error of indiscriminately mixing two productions,

ductions, of which one requires a light and warm, the other a dry and fatty soil.

“The appetite,” says an old proverb, comes with “eating;” from hence, I suppose it is, that the greatest part of the colonists, instead of employing the price of their first crops to pay their ruinous debts, make use of it to purchase a greater number of negroes; that is, to contract new debts without previously calculating whether the benefits they expect to derive from the produce of a more extended cultivation will make up for the difference, always very considerable, between their credit, and their means of acquittal.

I have said above “the greatest part,” for there may still, perhaps, be found a few whom nature has endowed with a solidity of understanding never misled by false calculations, and a degree of moderation which preserves them from every unnecessary expence. But what an inextricable labyrinth of embarrassment and penury does not he involve himself in, who with more vanity than prudence, has scarcely advanced a step in the road to fortune, ere, dazzled by the blaze of the riches he sees in the distant view, and believing he may from that instant anticipate on the future, he hastens to exhaust his means of success to purchase new ones, and in his  
present



present mediocrity, indulges himself in pleasures which his future opulence would scarcely support !

And if we reflect but a moment, Sir, on the kind of men which frequent the colonies, we shall see that it can hardly be otherwise. Poor, and consequently unacquainted with the œconomy of a property which they have never possessed, greedy of pleasures, in proportion as they have been sensible of their privation, and extremely accessible to pride, which possesses every species of *parvenu*, their first care will be always to enjoy, and their enjoyment, that of surrounding themselves with every thing, which by flattering their despicable vanity, may contribute to dissipate all memory of their former wretchedness. For do not imagine, Sir, that in the struggle between avarice and self-love, the victory always falls to the first. The more deeply they have felt their former nullity, the more haste they will make to procure whatever gives them consequence. What ! do you imagine they have abandoned their country, encountered the tempests of the ocean, and braved the fires of the torrid zone to enter, in the new world, upon a new course of œconomy !

For the rest, Sir, what I have said in the preceding pages must be understood to be levelled merely at the *abuse* of credit : since I cannot be ig-

norant that the thing itself is equally advantageous to both the parties concerned, when it has for its object a useful enterprize, of which the profits finally promise to exceed the interest. I know well that credit is the soul of commerce, and that commerce is the vivifying principle of political societies; I know, too, that the proportion between the profits, and the interest of the sum borrowed, is not always disregarded, since there are planters to be found who have made, and still make prodigious fortunes—but besides, that these fortunes have not always been acquired by commerce, and the credit attendant on it; the general deduction is not the less true, that examples of this sort are much rarer than is usually supposed; and that here as well as elsewhere, it is necessary, if you wish to attain a certain degree of prosperity, to join a great share of good fortune to a great share of good sense.

What is at once pleasant, and ridiculous, is the serious air with which the trader lays claim to the gratitude of the colonist on the score of exacting no interest for the advances he is in the habit of making:—it is, in fact, the custom to stipulate for none, in the transactions which take place between the merchant and the planter; but where is the novice so completely ignorant of affairs, as not to know that the secret of this pretended generosity consists



consists in comprehending the interest in the principal, and that the whole is little better than a miserable subterfuge, behind which the lender endeavours to secure himself from the reproach of the most shameful usury!

I have appropriated, Sir, the profits of the first crops to the payment of debts; for the observation is no less true here than in Europe, that he who pays his debts is growing rich. This step, however, will not prevent the new colonist from withholding from those profits, enough to enable him to live more commodiously than he could at first, to proceed to the construction of drying-slopes, magazines, mills, casars, &c. to furnish his house, and to procure some domestic negroes—most expensive articles for a man in his situation: since, if he takes them from out-lying slaves, (to say nothing of the difficulty of forming them to the service of the house) the labour of a negro being estimated at twelve or fifteen hundred livres, each of them will represent a sum of forty or fifty thousand livres, to be withdrawn from the capital of his fortune: and if he buys them already formed, it is to be presumed the seller will not forget to make him pay the charges of their education. I do not think it possible for him to procure the two last articles for less than five and thirty, or forty thousand livres.

Undoubtedly,

Undoubtedly, when he is got thus far, he may look upon himself as established, and indulge reasonable hopes of the future: but, observe, Sir, to arrive at this point, that is, at his fourth year, it has cost him near fifty thousand livres, without reckoning the twenty thousand which he still owes for the purchase of his first ten negroes; and that, if by their means he has been enabled to clear and plant a hundred squares of ground, the labour of getting in the crops will from thenceforth exact a much greater number of hands, and consequently call on him for new disbursements, which cannot safely be estimated at less than 100,000 livres.

Of ten Europeans who settle at Saint Domingo, seven at least will return home the moment they have acquired enough to live there in comfort. Those whose characters, or whose tastes are so repugnant to colonial manners as to induce them to break off all connection with the colonies, look out for a responsible purchaser, to whom they dispose of their property for a certain sum, to be paid outright, or by instalments. You must not imagine, however, that the price of an estate is regulated by its annual income here as with you, and sold accordingly—no, Sir—and I think I have already mentioned the reason of it. Others, anxious to retain a valuable property, confide the management of their affairs to an agent, who has either a fixed salary,



salary, or a share of the profits; and appoint a proctor to overlook him.

This is exposing themselves to a world of troubles; for if the agent be not the most honest of men, no overlooking will prevent his making his fortune at the expence of his principal. You may suppose, too, that the choice of a proctor is not without its difficulties; since, if you take him from the class of your equals, that is, from that of the planters, his own affairs will allow him to give but a superficial attention to yours; and if you address yourself to a man of the law, to a proctor by profession—although there may be honest people every where—you know the inveterate prejudice against this description of men; and in such a case, it is not absolutely impossible but that your interests might suffer a little from the collusion which may take place between him and the agent. I appeal on this head, to the experience of the greater part of the proprietors resident in Europe. For myself, Sir, placed between the choice of measures, all of which have their inconveniences, I am inclined to think that the plan of giving the agent a share in the produce of the estate which he administers, would at least have the advantage of attaching him, by his own interest, to the performance of his duty.

LET-

## LETTER XXXV.

*Port-au-Prince,  
July 1790.*

I HAVE been so happy, Sir, as to find on my arrival here, a vessel which sets sail to-morrow, and which I shall charge with my last letters to you. I have no idea where I shall be when they reach you ; most certainly not at Saint Domingo : for I embark in three days.

The desire of examining accurately the space between the two coasts, the South and West, having determined me to take a different, but much less practicable rout than the common one, I sent my baggage before me, and set out on horseback, attended by the same negro that accompanied me on a former journey.

I purposed to reach Leogane without stopping ; and nothing would have prevented me, had not a violent storm, which came on about noon, suddenly swelled the torrents I had to pass to such a degree, that I was obliged to waste a good deal of time in searching, along their borders, for fords where I  
ran



ran no risk of being drowned, or swept away by the impetuosity of the currents.

Night surprised me in the midst of these deserts, drenched with rain, and utterly incapacitated from continuing my journey till day break. Our horses too, were so much exhausted with hunger and fatigue, that I concluded to turn them into the first savanna we reached, and to pass the night myself under the shelter of some tree.

This plan was far from being agreeable to my negro, who, at the approach of the storm, and afterwards, on the closing in of the evening, had pointed out to me several habitations at a distance, where he would engage I should be well received; but which I constantly refused to approach, in the fear that I should only find there new reasons to deplore the decay of hospitality at Saint Domingo — Do not you see, Sir, that this will afford an ample theme for the eloquence of my panegyrist, who will hereafter say “such was the favourable opinion he entertained of his contemporaries, that he would frequently carry his delicacy so far as to take their virtues on trust, rather than prove them by his own experience!”

In groping about to the right and left to find a situation favourable to my designs, I was suddenly  
struck

struck with a gleam of light, to which I instantly directed my steps. It proceeded from a little country house belonging to a proctor of Leogane; in which I found only a female negro, who took care of it, and who received me with a degree of hospitality I might have vainly looked for in the houses of many whites.

As I had not even a change of linen with me, the absolute necessity of drying every thing I had on, would have compelled me to pass the rest of the evening in the perfect state of innocence of our first father, if the kind-hearted negresses had not flown to the succour of my modesty with an old pair of pantouffles, and a waistcoat, which composed the whole rural wardrobe of the proprietor: to these she added an under-petticoat of her own, to wrap round my middle.

It was in this Amazonian habiliment that I sat down to supper before a good fire, while the house-keeper got my bed ready—in which I should have slept much less profoundly than I did, if I had suffered myself to be alarmed by the universal opinion, that rains are fatal to the traveller, when they pierce to the skin before he can reach a place of shelter. I can easily imagine that, as their natural effect is to check the perspiration, they are sometimes attended with dangerous consequences; but

I am



I am equally persuaded, that nothing more is necessary to render them perfectly innoxious, than to re-establish that perspiration as soon as possible; which in a climate like this, is a matter of no great difficulty.

I got up before day-break and proceeded on my journey: the morning was as fine as the evening before was disagreeable. Two hours riding carried me across the mountains; from thence a gentle descent led to the plain, which, terminated by the sea, and enlivened by the rising sun, afforded from the spot where I stood, a most charming spectacle.

I found along the road a vast number of tour-louroux, or land crabs, who had stationed themselves at the mouth of the hole which served them for a retreat, and appeared to be enjoying the morning air: these animals immediately retire at the approach of travellers, making a kind of clicking noise with their claws, as if to warn the neighbourhood of the advance of an enemy. I have great doubts whether what I have heard be true, that they have been known to devour men alive; but I am perfectly sure that they resort in great numbers to the vicinity of burying grounds, for the sake of feeding on the dead bodies: this, however, does not prevent the negroes from eating them.

Less

Less occupied now than at my first *sortie* from the mountains, when the habitude of seeing nothing but rocks, precipices, and woods, made me run my eyes eagerly, and indiscriminately over a landscape altogether new to me; I had leisure to contemplate a group of superb palms, on the right of the road, intirely insulated in a plain from five and thirty to forty miles in length, and from ten to twelve in breadth.

At the sight of such a beautiful colonade, it is no longer necessary to enquire where the sculptors of antiquity found the model, and the proportions of those which decorated the palaces of kings, and the temples of the Gods. I have never had the good fortune to see those chef-d'œuvres, whose very ruins render the country which possesses them illustrious; those scattered fragments

Où dans tout son orgueil gît le néant de l'homme ;  
but struck with the character of grandeur and majesty which nature impresses on her own monuments, I could not avoid exclaiming, Where is the Michael Angelo, or the Palladio who would undertake to build a temple to which this colonade should serve for a peristyle. \*

I found

\* It is so true that the arts, even the most complicated, borrow all their principles from nature, that the three architects who constructed, the one the temple of Balbec, the other that of Palmyra, the



I found at Port-au-Prince, the two things which I expected: a vessel to take me to the United States, and minds excessively inflamed by the progress of the Revolution. I arrived at Saint Domingo in the *Venus*, I shall quit it in the *Flora*: these charming names seem to augur well—yet I found the island attacked by the first symptoms of the political fever which preys upon you, and I leave it in the first convulsions of a delirium. Neither the colonial assembly, nor the governor, *Monf. de Peyniers* appears to me in the principles which the exigencies of the time require. The one wishes to give too great an extent to the power with which circumstances have invested it; and the other, ill advised by a young man more violent and hot-headed than wise\*, exhibits such an incoherent mixture of obstinacy and pliability, as must infal-

the third the colonade of the Louvre, perfectly correspond in the number and order of this species of decoration; although neither of the three could have any knowledge of the work of the two others. See Volney's *Voyage in Syria and Egypt*. Vol. 2. Chap. 30.

\* The Chevalier de Mauduit, Colonel of the regiment of Port-au-Prince, an officer full of zeal and courage, who served with distinction in the army of Rochambeau in America, but much too rash and inexperienced for the critical situation in which he stood. He was murdered sometime afterwards by the very soldiers with whom he had broke up the Colonial Assembly, and in the bosom of that very assembly—where he was seeking an asylum from the fury of his troops.

libly

libly tend to encourage the factious, and disgust the well-intentioned. I see but one way of saving the colony : it is to bring about the revolution by the hands of those who are ineffectually employed in endeavouring to retard its progress. They can no longer check ; they may still direct it. \*

The bulk of the colonists, the merchants, the different departments of administration, have all an equal interest to maintain order : let them speedily join themselves to the governor, to baffle and counteract the dark intrigues carrying on by the disaffected to excite an insurrection of the people of colour, and the negroes. These culpable perturbators are perfectly well known to be the secret emissaries of the sect called, or calling itself, the FRIENDS OF THE BLACKS. What would these people have ?—Suppose they should succeed in establishing their principles, what advantage do they expect to derive from their victory ? Is it the abolition of slavery ? But this would bring on the ruin of the colonies : and in what way can this ruin,

\* It was precisely so in the mother country, where the Court fell into the same error as the administrators of Saint Domingo. Nothing would have been, originally, more easy than to *direct* the Revolution : but they no sooner saw the torrent ready to burst forth than, blindly attached to the old and trivial system of court hydraulics, instead of digging for it a broad and deep channel, they attempted to confine it by a dyke, and—all was swept away !

which



which would inevitably draw after it that of the commerce of France, possibly interest either the happiness, or the liberty of the inhabitants of Paris? Or is it the hope of putting a stop to the consumption of colonial produce, with the slavery which produces it? But they must know little of the power of habit, become a kind of second nature, who can fool themselves with such a chimera. What name, then, shall we give to this absurd policy, this frantic *civism*, this barbarous humanity, which for the sake of withdrawing some Africans from a state of slavery daily becoming more tolerable, (to say nothing of the torrents of blood it must occasion) would condemn France to lose the immense mass of specie with which it would be thenceforth necessary to purchase from foreigners, what they had hitherto bought of us! And do they reckon for nothing, then, the three hundred million livres which the colonies pour annually into the ports of the mother country, where they give bread to more than five millions of people!

I see with pain, Sir, that the revolutionary vertigo has already made such progress amongst the inhabitants, that even at table, surrounded by mulattoes and negroes, they indulge themselves in the most imprudent discussions on liberty, &c. Very soon the slaves of the neighbouring plantations, connected with those of the town, will carry home  
the

the discourses they have heard, and comment upon them in their own way. "If these whites are only "free to-day," they will say, "what were they "then yesterday? Slaves like ourselves"—and God preserve me from being a witness of the consequences of this mode of reasoning! To discuss the *Rights of Men* before such people, what is it but to teach them that power dwells with strength, and strength with numbers!

Will you have, Sir, my parting word on this country? It is that the more I know the inhabitants, the more I felicitate myself on quitting it. I came hither with the *noble* ambition of occupying myself solely in acquiring a fortune; but destined to become a *master*, and consequently to possess *slaves*, I saw, in the necessity of living with them, that of studying them with attention to know them—and I depart with much less esteem for the one, and pity for the other. When a person is what the greater part of the planters are, he is made to have slaves: when he is what the greater part of the slaves are, he is made to have a master: *TOUT LE MONDE EST ICI A SA PLACE.*

LET-



## LETTER XXXVI.

*At Sea,  
July 1790.*

I LITTLE expected, Sir, that the last moments of my residence at Saint Domingo were to be marked by an event, of which the issue might have detained me there longer than I wished, if I had not judged it improper to take an active part in a dispute which both sides seem to have carried too far. Not that I would not, with the greatest pleasure, have contributed with all my might to the success of any enterprize capable of re-establishing the public concord: but seeing, after waiting several days, that nothing was decided; and that, having begun by a rash and inconsiderate step, they took no prompt and vigorous measures to sustain it, I went on board on the evening of the 10th, and set sail immediately after.

I leave the gazettes, and the relations of the two parties, to inform you of what passed; observing only that I draw a very melancholy presage from it, of the future destiny of the colony.\*

\* The reader will find, in an interesting work lately published at Paris, intitled *Désastres de Saint Domingue*, that I was but too true a prophet.

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Whatever,

Whatever, Sir, may be the motives which determined the conduct of the two parties, both appear to have been deficient in prudence and moderation. The colonial assembly in taking the military habit, the inauspicious characteristic of a dark conspiracy; and the government in opposing it by an armed force, which has occasioned the shedding of blood; while, supported by its ancient influence, by the public opinion, and by the best wishes of every honest man, it might have easily dispersed, without striking a single blow, an assembly, which by its heterogeneous composition, its refractory spirit, and its avowed hostility to lenient measures, had already deprived itself of the succour of opinion, pretty generally declared in favour of any prudent and decisive step which promised to maintain tranquillity and good order.

Unhappily, Sir, the tutelary force from whence this blessing ought to have flowed, was composed of two elements, whose combination has always been productive of misfortunes; doubt and irresolution in him who stammers out his orders; confidence and rashness in him who solicits them with more warmth than reflection, and executes them with more impetuosity than prudence.

The preference given to the white over the tricoloured cockade, might possibly be meritorious in  
him



him who looked upon it as the signal of his devotion—but, in supposing he had joined to some slight concessions on this head, a firm declaration to maintain, at all events, the order which culpable perturbators were endeavouring to destroy, I have not the smallest doubt but that such an act of complaisance, (which certainly could not in this instance be regarded as a proof of weakness) would have had the happiest effect, by depriving his enemies of the opportunity of calumniating his intentions. Time will shew whether I am in the right.

Would you believe that, waked in a fright by the confused mixture of tumultuous cries, vague interpellations, and indistinct shrieks, interrupted by the clash of arms, and the noise of musquetry and cannon; would you believe that, in the midst of the disorder, increased by the darkness of the night, of a city, of which one part of the inhabitants ran headlong into the danger they sought to shun, while the other, stupified with fear, scarce retained presence of mind enough to conceal themselves: would you believe that a culpable smile escaped me at the sight of certain men, long indignant at not uniting to the treasures of opulence, the trifling prerogatives which console nobility for its poverty, and who have every where been the first to blow up the coals of a devouring fire, which

after having consumed those fantastic possessions, will not be long in involving more substantial ones in the blaze; would you believe, I say, that I smiled at seeing those fervent promoters of LIBERTY and EQUALITY, trembling at the present moment for property more solid than vain titles of honour, join themselves to the ARISTOCRACY, which had still power to save their magazines, and their account-books from the gripe of the EQUALITY of fortune, and from the LIBERTY of seizing it!

I do not know whether this first lesson will henceforth render egoism more wise, and vanity more modest—but in case the progress of events should necessitate the sacrifice of a victim, I do not see that there would be much to regret if the ravages of the flames, kindled by the priests of Plutus, should terminate with the conflagration of his temple.

However this may be, Sir, I leave the legislative assembly dispersed and put to flight by the fire of the cannon; the power a little too *executive*, embarrassed with its victory, and doubtful what it should do to justify its necessity, and turn it to the best advantage; the public in that state of stupor and incertitude which usually succeeds a violent commotion; and my old friend the Chamber of Commerce very happy at having saved its magazines,



zines, and very busy in securing them from the next attempt of the sovereign people.

Although the public peace was so far restored as to allow of my staying long enough at Port-au-Prince to make an excursion in the plain of the Cul-de-Sac, which I purposed to push as far as possible, Monsr. Lynham, Captain of the *Flora*, manifested so much anxiety to quit the coast, although his vessel had not all her cargo on board, that, uncertain whether I should find with another the same conveniencies which his ship, his society, and the arrangements we had made, seemed to promise, I finally determined to embark with him.

I went on board, then, as I have already said, on the tenth, about midnight. We took advantage of the morning breeze, and in a few hours had made a good offing, leaving the uncultivated island of Gonave to leeward. The next day we passed the Lucayes, several of which did not appear so uninhabitable as I had been told they were. They want wood and water, it is true, but with regular rains, and cisterns, amends may be made for the latter of these privations. For the former, indeed, it is not so easy to find a resource: but, besides that the natural sterility of any spot seldom  
opposes

opposes an invincible obstacle to human industry\*; the proximity of Saint Domingo would admit of the importation of an article, the want of which is not very imperiously felt in these climates. And I do not doubt, if that island should ever become so populous as to oblige a part of its inhabitants to seek an abode elsewhere, but the industry of emigration, always extremely laborious, active, and ingenious, would do at the Lucayes what it has often done in other places.

There is, Sir, in every man, whose destiny transports him to a new and virgin soil, a principle of intelligence and energy which may be reckoned upon, and which is capable of every thing, when seconded by a good administration. This principle is the sentiment of property, which is to our civil, what the consciousness of our virtues is to our moral existence: that is to say, the key-stone which supports the sentiment of our proper dignity. It is this which almost every where in the new world, and especially in the country where I am going, has transformed hordes of malefactors, of indolent and

\* I shall cite, by way of example Prussian, Dutch, and Austrian Guilders, where, in 1793, I saw the same heaths which I had left perfectly sterile in 1776, covered with woods, by the provident industry of the inhabitants. Now it is certain that a soil which produces an oak or a fir, may be equally made to produce an ear of corn or a potatoe.

thoughtless



thoughtless vagabonds, into a race of men, prudent, honest and laborious.

M. Lynham, whom I like exceedingly, flatters himself that we shall be at Norfolk in little more than ten or twelve days. The wind, however, begins to shuffle, the horizon thickens with black and louring clouds, the sea grows hollow ; in a word, signs, which I think I cannot mistake, announce to me that we shall not reach Virginia either so soon or so tranquilly as I expected. My conductors certainly know more of the matter than myself ; and yet, on these occasions, I have often seen the prescience of the most skilful mariners intirely baffled ; because, of all mankind, they are perhaps the most subject to sacrifice the monitions of experience to the illusions of hope. I have seen enough to convince me that, out of ten shipwrecks, or unlucky accidents, five at least may be attributed, either to the imprudence of the sailors, or the avarice of the merchants, who seldom proportion the crews to the size of the ships—Thus, of two captains, the one rash, the other cautious, the former will lose masts, sails, men, and ships ; the latter, something still more precious to the trader, and for which nothing can compensate, time, irreparable time !

LET-

## LETTER XXXVII.

*At Sea,  
July 1790.*

IT has nearly happened to me, Sir, as to the poor Cassandra. In vain did I prophesy; every one laughed at my predictions; and yet we owe our safety solely to the strength of our ship.

We passed two days in that sort of stormy calm which I mentioned in my last. Thick and gloomy clouds accumulated in every point of the horizon: already the indistinct and lengthened mutterings of thunder struck the ear from those obscure and immoveable masses, which were crossed from time to time by long flashes of pale and sickly fire. Not a breath of air indicated from what quarter of the globe its relaxed spring would finally impel and set in motion this tremendous apparatus. Never did storm present a more alarming spectacle than this, of a calm which joined all the symptoms of fury to the immobility of death! Each of us was contemplating it with a sad and silent inquietude, when, a little before midnight, the sky seemed to clear up in the South-West, from whence the wind suddenly



suddenly blew as if some invisible hand had removed the valve which detained it in captivity.

We proceeded on our rout, at first with caution, afterwards with a sufficient degree of courage to join to the top-sails, the main-sail and the mizen.

Although I apprehended that this was placing rather too much confidence in a wind, whose abrupt commencement filled me with suspicion; yet as Captain Lynham set me the example, I went to lie down like him, and like him, too, should have fallen asleep, if the violence with which the waves dashed against the sides of the vessel had not advertised me that the sea was rising with the wind.

I had taken notice that our first mate was one of those men with whom an inconsiderate kind of carelessness supplies the place of courage, and whose whole theory is confined to the routine of an experience, far from extensive. Urged by a sort of activity which I can hardly venture to attribute to a nobler motive than mere restlessness, I went upon deck—What was my astonishment to find every body in the most perfect security, amidst the most decisive marks of an outrageous tempest; and a part of the crew gaily employed in hoisting the top-gallant-sails, as if we had been under the peaceable influence of the trade winds!

Good

Good God, Sir! said I to the first mate, who was carelessly stretched on the quarter deck, what are you thinking of—to carry so many sails in such weather as this! “ ’Tis nothing,” said he without stirring from his place. Thinking it, however, a great deal too much, I went below to inform the captain of it, who was still asleep, and whom I had some little difficulty to wake. While he was putting on his clothes, and I was preparing to follow him, a dreadful crash made us run to the cabin stairs—it was too late! a torrent of water rushing down the narrow passage, dashed us both backwards upon the floor.

Recovering from the blow, which had stunned us, we sprang upon the deck, struggling with the fury of despair against the waves which assailed us: but, O God! what a spectacle! Our two masts, loaded with all their sails, and broken, the one lying across the deck, the other hanging from the iron work of the main-top, kept the vessel so completely under water, that we had the utmost difficulty to reach the aft part of the quarter deck, the only part of the hulk that was not submerged, and to which I immediately lashed myself with one of the broken halyards.

Of seven seamen, including our rash and provident mate, this last in attempting, when too late,  
to



to assist in furling the sails, had fallen from the main-top-mast-yard, and sprained his back ; another had broken his right arm ; and a third, in endeavouring to furl the fore-top-gallant-sail, had been precipitated with the mast into the sea. There remained then but four men—but such men ! Never did intrepidity and coolness perform greater prodigies of courage, strength, and presence of mind ! As oft as the rapidity with which the enormous mountains of water that successively overwhelmed us, left us a moment to take breath, and think of our safety, our sailors seized the lucky interval to clear away, with their hatchets the rigging that still kept the masts attached to the ship. We were more than half an hour in the dim and doubtful twilight which divides life from death, as the dawn of a cloudy day separates the uncertain beams of the morning from the shades of night.

Let me confess my weakness, Sir. Not relying for our safety altogether on ordinary means, I judged it necessary to have recourse to a power whose intervention has always been efficacious. Addressing myself, therefore, to the crew, I pronounced aloud the vow of—distributing among them a bag of piastres which I held in my hand, if they succeeded in saving us : and they redoubled their efforts.

At

At length the *Flora*, disembarassed from the wreck which incumbered her, righted with every shock, and, in a short time, recovered her proper trim.

This moment, which we awaited with a kind of religious horror, and which was surely for us the *moment suprême*, was the signal of our salvation, and of a sentiment more sweet than that of joy—for joy has a voice, and we had only tears.

I now, for the first time, perceived that *some one*, enveloped in the skirts of a riding-coat which I had slipped on in my haste, was closely embracing my legs. This *some one* was a large ape, who, having in the tumult broken the rope that attached him to the stern, had taken refuge with me. Thus I had still served for an asylum to an unfortunate being, when I no longer saw any for myself!

Hitherto we had not found that any person was missing; but now, in calling over the names, we found that we had lost our youngest sailor; and we concluded that he must have fallen over-board with the top-gallant-sail he was furling. The crew immediately had recourse to their speaking-trumpets; at length some one tranquilly replied (in his own language) “I am coming.” This vigorous young man had clung fast to the wreck of the mast, where,  
when



when he saw his opportunity, he had struggled so efficaciously, and shifted with so much presence of mind from fragment to fragment, and from rope to rope, that he finally “ came ” on deck. Judge if he was well received !

We were still, however, far from being in a prosperous state ; but we were safe for the moment, and as a traveller has well observed, “ the unfortunate “ are not slow to hope \* : ” we therefore indulged that of extricating ourselves, though nothing announced that the winds and waves would so speedily abate—and on what, think you, was our hope founded ? On that which causes the despair of others ; on our having nothing more to lose.

We tried the pumps, and found that the ship made no more water than usual ; this, in our distress, was a circumstance no less rare than fortunate. All our masts were reduced to the stump of the mizen : the wind therefore had no longer any hold of us ;—so that by nailing down the hatches we might, like the family of Noah, have braved in our ark, all the fury of the ocean. And, indeed, it was by this we terminated the labours, or, as I should rather call them, the combats of a night as long as disastrous, and during which I had

\* *Naufrage et Aventures de Pierre Viaud.*

more than once repeated, from I know not what poet,

“ O! que la nuit est longue à la douleur qui veille ! ”

The day brought back fair weather much sooner than we expected, and with it the means of recovering such parts of the wreck of our rigging as the sea had not swept away, i. e. some of the halyards, the mizen-yard with the sail still fixed, and the top, which we succeeded, after incredible efforts, in replacing.

Unhappily, ships not destined for long voyages are seldom provided with spare masts and sails. This was the case with ours. The second day after our disaster, when it became necessary to think of repairing our losses, we could find nothing in the sail-room but a main-top-gallant-sail, a stay-sail, a few ells of new canvass, and a little cordage: on the deck we had only a top-mast.

I will spare you, Sir, the long enumeration of the resources we found in our industry. The recital of the perils of a man, struggling against nature, adversity, and death, may have an interest with his fellow creatures, which cannot be hoped for from a detail of the efforts of his intelligence only—I shall content myself, then, with saying that  
the



the top-mast, fixed to the stump of the main-mast, stood in its stead; that the main-top-gallant-sail, enlarged with a few breadths of new canvass, served for a main-sail; that the sheets of my bed furnished a fore-top-sail, which was supported by a mast made of a bundle of laths unfolded at Saint Domingo; that the coverture of my bed, joined to that of Captain Lynham's, made a kind of mizen, which was hoisted on the ensign-staff; and that by means of this apparatus, a little less highly finished than that of the vessel which carried Cleopatra, we had the satisfaction of finding ourselves in a condition to run three or four knots an hour with a moderate wind.

By our reckoning we were not more than two hundred leagues from land. We had seen several ships, who taking us at a distance, perhaps, for a Barbary cruizer, drew near to reconnoitre us—but after certifying themselves that instead of pirates we were only people in distress, no signals that we could make, could induce them to offer us the assistance of which we stood so much in need. One of them came close enough to be hailed, but in instead of condescending to answer us, bore away on a different tack—at this base and unfeeling egoism, you will recognize, Sir, the worthy instruments of the avarice which employs them. Had not Captain Lynham been more prudent than myself, we should, with the assistance of our four  
pieces

pieces of cannon, have sent this hard-hearted Pharisee all the langridge we had on board. As cruelty is always cowardly, I do not doubt but our boldness would have made him give to fear what he denied to humanity—and, perhaps, I should have done right: for a contrary wind, by prolonging our voyage, may still reduce us to dreadful extremities; or blowing weather deprive us, piece by piece, of our wretched rigging; and then—what will become of us!

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### LETTER XXXVIII.

*Norfolk, in Virginia,  
August 1790.*

ONE would think, Sir, that wherever I went, ships were purposely stationed to receive and carry you my letters. I found three here on the point of sailing for France, with almost the whole of the cargoes they brought out. I will tell you another time, the cause of this error in the speculations of  
the



the French merchants ; at present I must finish the narrative of our ill-omened passage.

More lucky than we had any reason to expect, the wind, constantly moderate and favourable, allowed us to make use of *all* our sails. We had need of them to stem a current two or three leagues in extent ; and of a wonderful rapidity ; which, running from the gulph of Mexico, crosses the streights of the Bahama islands, in a direction diametrically opposite to the wind, and produces a kind of race, which occasioned our ship to roll so prodigiously, that if we had carried top-masts would probably have brought them to the board.

We were near seven hours in crossing this species of torrent in a diagonal line ; and I know no contrast more disagreeable than that of experiencing with a serene sky, and a favourable wind, all the disgusting circumstances of the most laborious navigation. It would not be impossible, Sir, for the pilot who should follow our track with the wind in the direction of the current, supposing him to be not altogether furnished with the necessary knowledge, to find, at the end of twenty-four hours, a mis-reckoning, so much the more unaccountable in his opinion, as the agreement of the wind and the tide, rendering the existence of the latter

A a

scarce

scarce perceptible, he would not even think of calculating his drift to leeward.

Notwithstanding the observations of many well-informed mariners, I am inclined to think we have yet but a very imperfect theory of the currents: and our merchant-ships taking advantage of this circumstance, never fail to attribute to them the numerous errors which result from their own negligence or incapacity. Such a theory, however, is of the utmost importance; and if the habitude of observing every thing could give any weight to my opinion, I should say that M. de Saint Pierre seems to have made a decided progress in the career of nature, by attributing to the periodical melting of the polar snows those currents, which his adversaries, with much less appearance of probability, go to look for in the moon. At present, when, thanks to the simple and luminous system of the author of the *Etudes de la Nature*, Experience is no longer obliged to mount to the stars in search of the cause of an effect which lies directly before us, we may indulge a hope that she will at length give us a reasonable solution of a problem, and thus contribute to the perfection of an art, dangerous without doubt, but where the slightest error may be attended with the most deplorable consequences.

Navigation,



Navigation, in this part of the new world, is rendered dangerous in foggy or blustering weather, by the extreme lowness of the land. It is particularly so in Virginia, where, at only two leagues distance, you distinguish the firs which grow along the shore, without seeing the shore itself; so that they seem to rise out of the ocean, which has a singular and striking effect. Aware, however, of the danger, they are extremely careful to send out coasting pilots to meet such vessels as are expected; and in no country, no not even in England, have I seen this species of boat better, or more elegantly constructed. It would be no great exaggeration to say of them, that they swim like fishes.

The first that boarded us in the morning of the 30th of July, was commanded by a negro—strange revolution of principles for a man just arrived from Saint Domingo! We engaged him to pilot us between Cape Charles and Cape Henry, so baptized by the celebrated John Smith, surnamed, by way of distinction, *The Navigator*. These two Capes, discovered in May 1607, by Captain Newport, form the entrance of Chesapeak-Bay, in 37° of latitude, the first to the North, the second to the South. They are separated by a channel of eighteen miles wide, in the midst of which we cast anchor about five in the morning: the ebb, strengthened by the accession of several streams, which, in Eu-

rope, might pass for rivers, not permitting us to make Norfolk till the turn of the tide.

A delay, which condemned us to pass another night at sea, suited Captain Lynham as little as myself. We were therefore put ashore on the side of Cape Charles, at the extremity of a sort of peninsula, formed by the Delaware on the north, and the Chesapeake on the south.

Affuredly, Sir, for those who arrive from Saint Domingo, the sight of this happy country is a charming spectacle! I was never weary of comparing the gloomy habitations I had just left, with the neat and elegant houses on every side of me, and the appearance of general ease and comfort with the pretended opulence of those, whose most fervent wish it is to quit the soil from which they draw their sustenance and their wealth! I should strive in vain to describe to you the pleasure I felt on coasting along the shore at the decline of a fine day: it is beyond my power—but if any one at that moment had proposed to me to go on board again, to seek, only at the distance of a few leagues, as many golden fleeces as there are leaves on all the trees of Colchis, I should have answered him only with a smile of contempt.

As we were obliged to make several detours to pass some little creeks, unprovided with bridges,  
we



we did not reach Hampton till night. It is a village, composed, like most of those I saw in North America, of regular streets, and decent houses. Here we drank tea, while we waited for the passage boat which was to take us to Norfolk, distant about sixty miles.

We embarked between seven and eight o'clock. The wind was fair at first, but a storm which was gathering on the coast, having nearly becalmed us, Captain Lynham, who was anxious to get home, got into a little skiff we had in tow, and landed on the right bank of James' River, from whence he proceeded on foot.

The companions of my voyage were three sailors, and a Jew, who laid down the instant we came on board, and fell fast asleep. After an hour's calm, the storm which had taken our wind from us, restored it with interest. Although it bent the two long masts which carried two large square sails, no precautions were taken to reduce them; while the master amused himself with detailing to me at great length, the history of several boats like his own, which had been lost in the passage, for want, as he said, of attending properly to the winds from the shore. This was a hint which was not thrown away upon me: I took my seat at the foot of one  
of

of the masts, with my knife in my hand, ready to cut the halyards if the squall increased.

Neither the redoubled claps of thunder, nor the dashing of the waves, could prevail upon the Israelite to get up. It was to no purpose to wake him, he dropt asleep again in an instant. If security in danger be the fruit of experience, it may be presumed that this sprig of Abraham was with Moses at the passage of the Red Sea.

About one in the morning we arrived at Norfolk : at landing I found Captain Lynham and his brother, who had been civil enough to provide a bed for me at their house : but, as I purposed staying here a few days to recover from my fatigues, I took up my lodgings at the inn, where I received a visit the next morning from our vice consul, Mons. Oster, at the moment I was setting out to call upon him, and with whom I dined in company with Captain Lynham and his brother.

Norfolk will be a tolerable town when it has repaired some ruins which still attest that it suffered in the revolution. The tradition which informs us it was called *Pouhatan* by the savages, proves it to be an ancient establishment of a people, who, in such a situation could be little more than fishers. It is at present the chief town of a county of its  
own



own name in the State of Virginia—surrounded by barren sands, and marshes, which must render it very unhealthy in summer, it would never have obtained its present rank, if its situation, favourable for trade, had not rendered it the mart of all the productions of lower Virginia.

I have had a very long and very instructive conversation with Monsieur Oster, which shall be the subject of my next letter.

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LETTER XXXIX.

*Norfolk,  
August 1790.*

**M**ONSIEUR Oster, who unites a great degree of complaisance and civility, to all the knowledge necessary for a man in his situation, has had the goodness to communicate to me a Memoire which he has sent to the Ministry, on the Commercial Relations of France and America.

This

This Memoire is full of the most judicious observations, the most instructive details, and the most extensive views: but I have ventured to predict to the author that it will have no effect—because the French ministry is yet far from comprehending the nature of the ties, which, since the discovery of the two Indies, connect the commerce of a state to its government; ties which England alone seems fully to have understood, and of which France and Holland appear to have been equally ignorant; since one has sacrificed commerce to power, that is, the prosperity of her establishments to a military force; and the other every precaution of strength and security to the extension and activity of her commerce.

Both you and I, Sir, have more than once regretted when together, that in the number of offices which compose the different departments of administration, there was not one specifically charged with the examination of *Projects*: and my regrets have been renewed since I read the Memoire of Mons. Oster. \*

According

\* It is curious to observe at the present moment, that Mirabeau the father wrote more than thirty years ago—"There is nothing so mad and extravagant that human reason may not be induced to look upon as wisdom. The time will come when we shall see offices opened, whose functions may be expressed by this title,



According to this gentleman, France has let slip a most favourable opportunity of substituting her commerce here in the place of that of England, at the commencement of the revolution. She had then, over her rival, the prodigious advantage of being able to furnish the United States with the principal articles, such as cloaths, cottons, wines, &c. of a superior quality, and at a lower price than England could possibly afford them. But, withheld by their doubts respecting the success of the revolution, and by the impossibility of granting the Americans the credit which they obtained from the English, our merchants confined themselves to a few timid essays, a few partial consignments, which, together with their absurd combinations—(absurd, because they shocked the prejudices, habits, and tastes of their new customers) soon sickened both parties of a trade, of which the continuance could only be purchased, on the side of the French, by expensive and reiterated sacrifices.

This did not escape the notice of the English; and accordingly the communication was no sooner opened between the *ci-devant* mother country and her colonies, than, far from calling in their old

“title, *Tribunal of Devastation!*” The son has not a little contributed to advance the accomplishment of the father’s prediction: and the *Committee of Public Safety* does not ill resemble the *Tribunal of Devastation*. See *L’Ami des Hommes*. Tome 1. Chap. 3.

debts,

debts, they hastened to offer additional credit to their debtors—and from that moment all was lost to France !

To this major consideration may be added a few others of little less importance: for first, the French merchants no sooner fancied themselves in a situation to trade here without the danger of a competition, than they raised the price, and debased the quality of their merchandize: then, speculating with no less heedlessness than avidity, more on the resources which French industry seemed to hold out to them, than on the simplicity of manners of a people too prudent to gratify their whims before they had provided for their wants, they poured in a prodigious quantity of those gewgaws of luxury and taste, which found as few purchasers as admirers. The result was a triple deficit; 1°. The expences of fitting out; 2°. The merchandize, which was either sold at a great loss, or carried back, and, 3°. The profits they expected to derive from their imports—for the purchase of which they had reckoned intirely on the produce of the wares which remained unfold.

But independent of the reasons drawn from the insufficient means, and erroneous speculations of the French merchants, there are considerations totally independent of policy and interest, which must  
and



and will for ever assure the English the almost exclusive commerce of the United States : these are, in the first place, the consanguinity of the two people, and, in the second, the similitude of religion, language, manners, tastes, &c.

I regard, then, as a political heresy, the general opinion that France has given a mortal blow to the commerce and power of England, by setting on foot and actually effecting the independence of America \*. It is true, the English ministry have lost the right of disposing of a number of civil and military employs ; of receiving taxes, which never defrayed the expences of the administration ; of levying troops, for which it has no occasion since the cession of Canada ; and of procuring sailors whom it does not want, or whom, if it does, it can always have for money.

But what is the effect generally, I believe I may say universally, expected from the independence of

\* It was the Duke de Choiseul who not only conceived, but prepared the insurrection of the English Colonies. Since I have been here I have received the most undoubted proofs, that, so early as the year 1766, he dispatched the Baron de Kalbe to Philadelphia, to found the inhabitants, and endeavour to detach them from the mother country. This minister had very little idea that he was thereby laying the foundation of the French Revolution—And thus it is that Fortune amuses herself with confounding the calculations of the sublime politics of courts!

the

the United States? A sensible increase of population, territory, and cultivation, which is every day justified by facts. And what will be the consequence? That the consumption of the manufactures of Europe will necessarily keep pace with the progress of cultivation and population, until the period, yet extremely remote, when agriculture and commerce shall restore to industry and the arts, the superabundance of population. And, as I have mentioned the reasons why England must necessarily possess the exclusive commerce of the United States, it will be that country which, in the end, instead of losing, will have gained every thing by a revolution from which we fondly predicted her ruin!

I will say more, Sir;—I will say that if ever the chance of political revolutions should bring about an event which might compromise the existence of England, she will inevitably find in the alliance of her ancient colonies, all the assistance she may need to enable her to preserve her due weight in the balance of Europe. Yes, Sir, the same country which formerly supplied her only with soldiers and sailors, will then supply her with fleets and armies.

Undoubtedly, if we were to form our opinion from that which personal animosities\*, and the recollection

\* Several instances of the false and calumnious judgments,  
dictated



collection of civil discords have generated in the minds of a few individuals of both nations, we might fancy that England and America would never be sincerely united. But these kinds of feelings are transitory—Nations must be looked upon as combatants for hire, whose animosity never survives the event : and the philosopher who knows how to make allowance for accidental causes, pierces with a steady eye through the mist, which the prejudices of the moment raise between him and the natural order of things.

It must not be concealed, however, that they are endeavouring here to open a direct communication with China, and, consequently, to deprive Great Britain of the advantages of this branch of commerce. They must be considerable, if we may judge from the obstinacy with which the English government persisted in maintaining the duty on tea; choosing rather to run the expence of a war, and risk the loss of America, than relax an iota on the point.

I presume that England (for the American commerce is, and will be for many years to come, to-

dictated by injustice to the spirit of party, may be found in a work entitled "*Travels into the Interior parts of North America* " by an English Officer," in two volumes.

tally

tally inadequate to the demands of the home consumption) I presume, I say, that England will still supply no inconsiderable part of it; and that the loss she may sustain in this single instance, will be more than balanced by the profits she will continue to make on the different articles of her manufactures, and on a consumption which she will always have the address to supply.

Notwithstanding my grave resolution to tempt no more, unless in case of absolute necessity, the dangers of the sea, I have taken a passage in an American vessel, bound directly for Philadelphia. My luggage is already on board; I shall follow it this evening, and in the course of the night we shall set sail.

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## LETTER XL.

*Norfolk,  
September 1790.*

THE wind, which was contrary the whole of yesterday, prevented us from sailing: after sleeping on board, therefore, I went a-shore in the morning



morning to visit Captain Lynham, who made me a proposal which has totally changed the direction of my itinerary. Having hired a bark, which he intends to command himself, to carry a part of his cargo to Alexandria, he pressed me with a kindness which I could not resist, to accompany him.

I have left, then, my trunks aboard the American, taking with me but a few necessaries for a week's expedition.

This new arrangement is by so much the more flattering to my inquisitive disposition, as it will give me an opportunity of traversing a part of the country, which I should not otherwise have seen.

We shall sail up the Chesapeake along the coasts of Virginia and Maryland, to the mouth of the Potomack, and up this river to Alexandria—from thence I shall pass, through Annapolis and Baltimore, to Philadelphia.

If I thus make a *detour* of some hundred miles, I shall at least have the pleasure of substituting, for a voyage by sea, always tedious, and sometimes dangerous, with people whom I do not know, a safe and agreeable navigation with a sociable man, whom I may question as much as I please, without  
any

any fear of exhausting, either his politeness, or his good nature.

I shall not yet, Sir, venture to give you my opinion on the new people with whom I am about to reside. The effect of the first impression will probably be different here, from what it was at Saint Domingo; for I have yet seen nothing to affect the favourable prejudices with which I arrived.

I confess, however, that what we vulgarly call manners, forms in this country, in some instances at least, a very singular contrast to the good-breeding of Europe. I was, for example, two days ago, dining at a table d'hôte with a pretty numerous party, when a person, who sat at my right hand, suffered one of those sighs to escape from his breast, to which the delicacy of our language will not permit me to give its real name. I should have looked upon it as an accident, or a liberty allowable in an old man, if he had not been successively imitated by the rest of his countrymen, who gave themselves up to the business with a gravity which I had the utmost difficulty to withstand—you would have sworn there was an emulation amongst them. Happily the evacuation of these species of Eolipyles was confined to the superior organ; and I was falling into a reverie on the extraordinary custom I had witnessed, when my attention was roused anew  
by



by a circumstance which gave a very different turn to my reflections.

I had just called for something to drink, when a large bowl of punch was introduced, and presented by the waiter to the eldest person in the company. The old gentleman drank out of it, and passed it to his next neighbour, who passed it to the next, till from hand to hand it had made the tour of the table. Great, Sir, as my astonishment was at this custom, I did not fail to drink out of the bowl with respect, as out of the hospitable cup of antiquity. With us, a delicate nation, and frequently as unsound in body as in mind, such a practice would be no less dangerous than ridiculous; but here, amongst a people equally sound in both, it is the evidence of a confidence too rare not to induce us to admire in it that precious simplicity of manners, of which it recalls the remembrance \*.

\* It was well observed by the Monthly Reviewers in the course of their strictures on some French Travels into North America, that if our neighbours would condescend to visit us before they embarked for that country, they would find but little novelty in it. The custom which appeared so strange to the Baron de Wimpffen, and which he appears to value so highly, as a relique of ancient simplicity, prevails in every village in England—more, I believe, from a want of cups and glasses, than from any other consideration, social or moral. 'T.

On the eve of plunging into the continent of the new world, I expect to be some time without finding an opportunity of writing to you: I shall not for that be the more inactive; for, when we love to find reasons for our judgments, and to account to ourselves for our enjoyments, to enjoy and observe become of themselves occupations.

If our judgments depend in any degree on the good or bad disposition of our minds, I fear I am in no small danger of viewing things with too favourable an eye. I will do all I can, however, to avoid it; and, I hope, with so much the more chance of success, as one must be born, in my opinion, with a force of imagination which I am far from possessing, to see any thing more in the inhabitants of this new state, than men who have preserved the purity of their manners amidst the disorders of a revolution, and not suffered the courage with which they secured their rights, nor the vigour with which they defended their liberty, to degenerate, the one into fanaticism, the other into ferocity—and assuredly this is a great deal.

Would to God, Sir, that posterity may one day say the same thing of you! Here they believe it will; because we generally judge of others by ourselves, and because the self-love of the Americans is flattered by the thought of having been your  
masters



masters in the twofold art *de ravir la foudre au Ciel, et le Sceptre aux Tyrans* \*. But when we compare, however, the institutions, the manners, and the ways of thinking of the two nations, we are tempted to wish, rather than to expect it.

\* It is well known that the enthusiasm of one of our poets inscribed this verse under the portrait of Franklin. A short time before his death some one talked to him of the revolution which was then beginning to break out in France. "FRANCE," said he, "WANTS REFORMS, AND NOT REVOLUTIONS: THE REMEDY WILL BE WORSE THAN THE DISEASE!"

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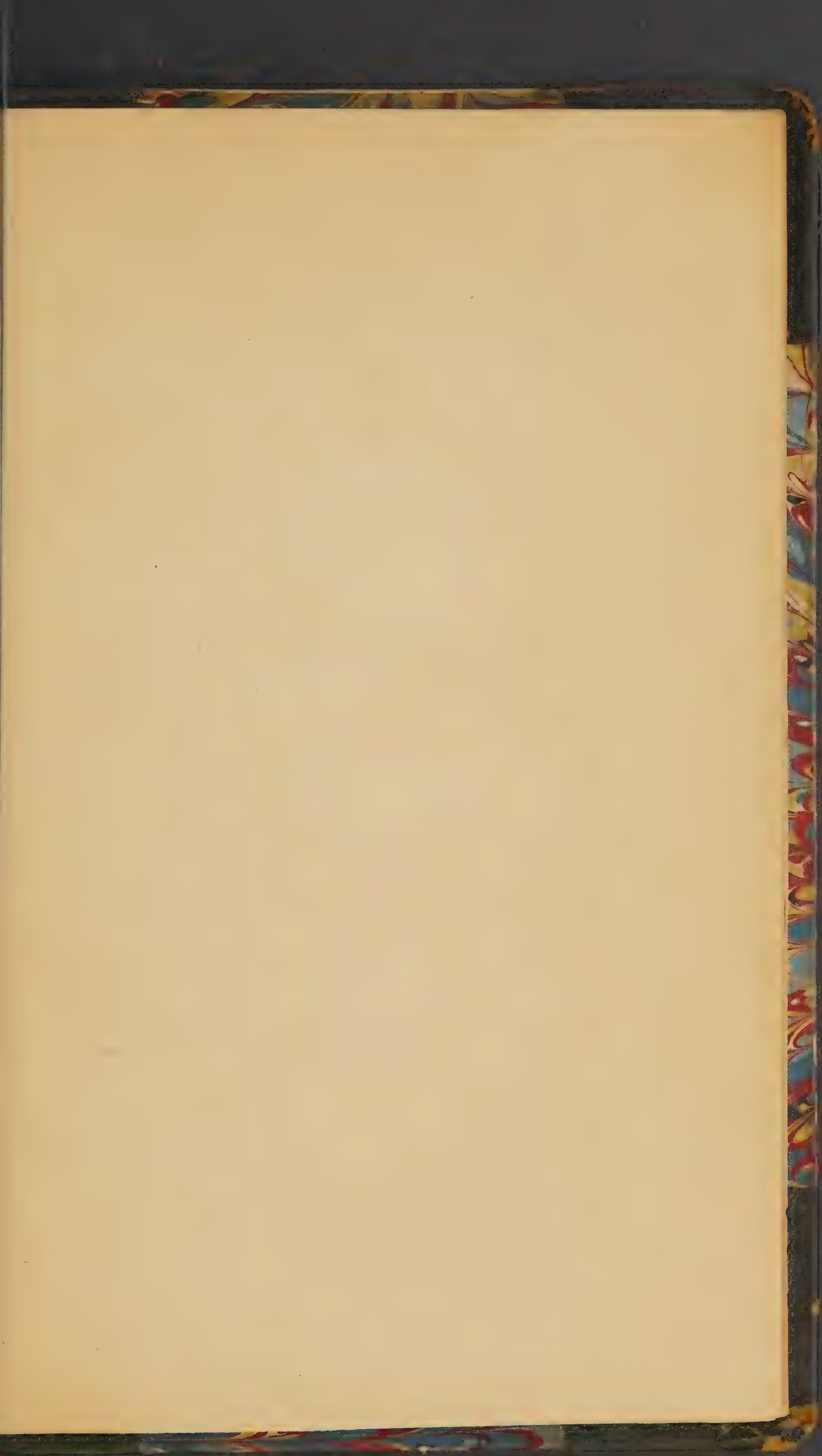
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